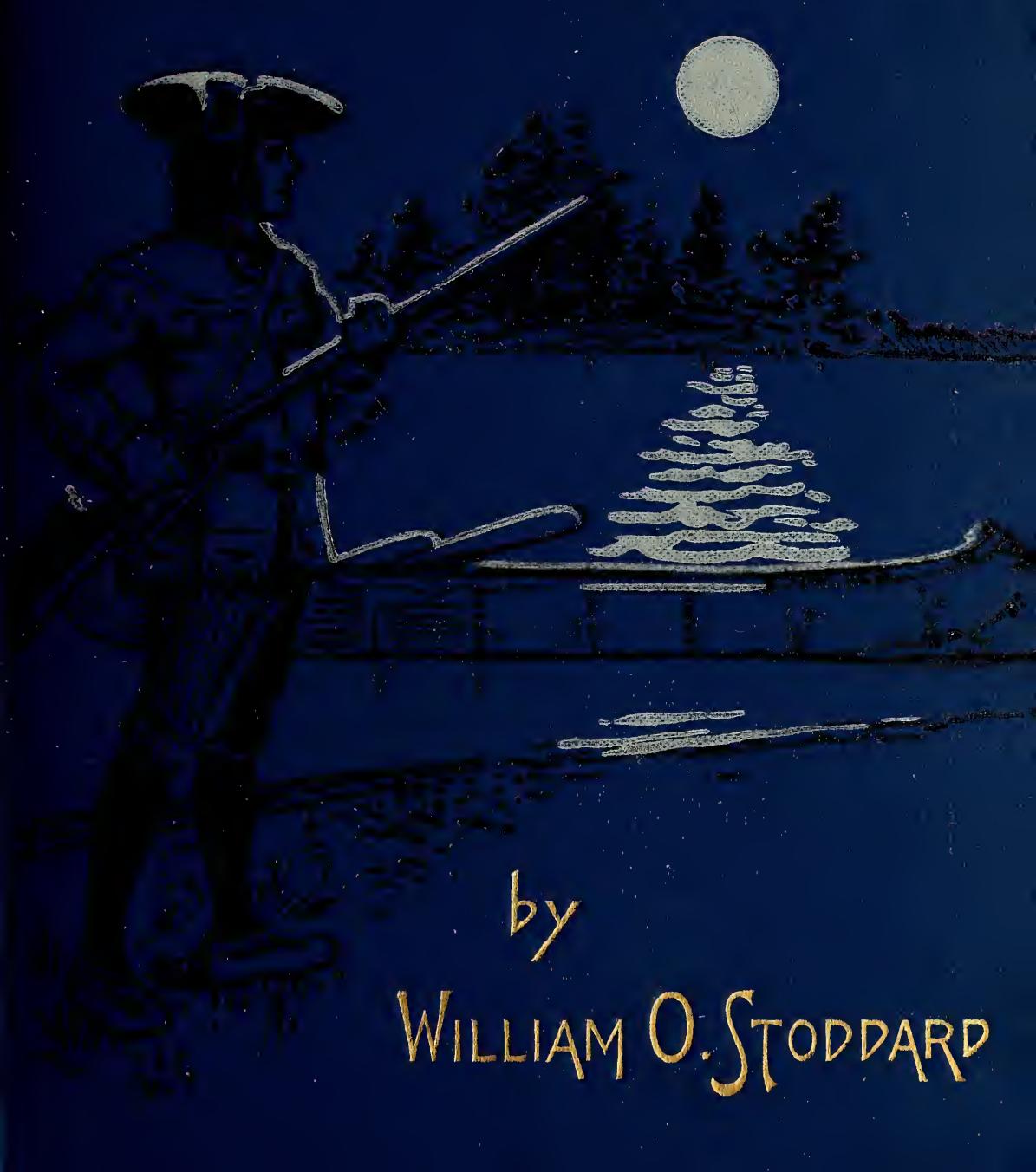
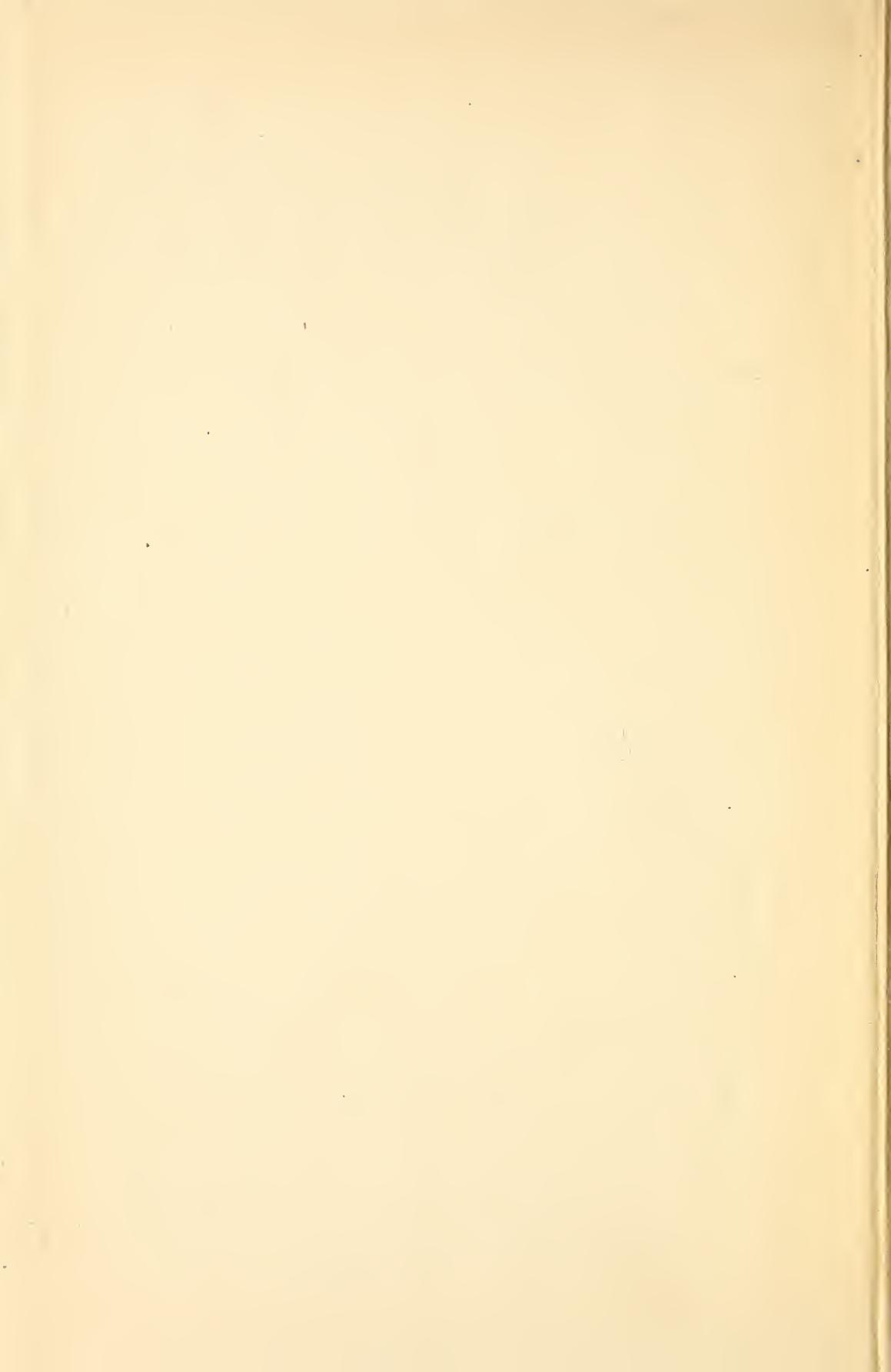


THE FIGHT FOR THE VALLEY



by

WILLIAM O. STODDARD



Ralph,
from Father.
Christmas 1922.

THE FIGHT FOR THE VALLEY

**A STORY OF THE SIEGE OF FORT SCHUYLER AND THE BATTLE
OF ORISKANY IN THE BURGOYNE CAMPAIGN OF 1777**

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Brom himself was trying to draw a bead on one of them.

THE FIGHT FOR THE VALLEY

A STORY OF THE SIEGE OF FORT SCHUYLER AND THE BATTLE OF ORISKANY IN THE BURGOYNE CAMPAIGN OF 1777

BY

WILLIAM O. STODDARD

AUTHOR OF CROWDED OUT O' CROFIELD, LITTLE SMOKE
THE SPY OF YORKTOWN, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED



NEW YORK AND LONDON
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

1912

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Published, September, 1904

Printed in the United States of America

P R E F A C E

MANY of the old-time battles are utterly forgotten. Of many other battles the importance is but imperfectly presented in history. An ordinary reader is ready, for instance, to ascribe due value to the American victories over the British army under General Burgoyne, but too many who read may be almost ignorant of the Oneida Lake and Mohawk Valley campaign which made those victories possible.

There was a long trial endured by the frontier heroes who held Fort Schuyler against great odds, and there was terribly hard fighting done at Oriskany. It is worth while to know by whom this was done and how. In attempting to tell the story of it, however, the author of this book has labored under one peculiar difficulty. He has been compelled to interpret or translate as best he might all of the conversations which were necessarily carried on in Dutch. While doing so, he has often been led to recall memories of his own early childhood and to hear again the fragments of Dutch songs which were sung to him by his Mohawk Valley grandfather and grandmother. Sometimes, too, they would scold him, for fun, in the tongue which even

in their own younger days was still spoken by many thousands of their neighbors. Other memories also came, of boyhood visits at the old Schuyler mansion in Albany, and of its legends, which were then told him concerning General Philip Schuyler and his Revolutionary feats. With these were vivid recollections of eager explorations of the old Sir William Johnson palace in the Herkimer County backwoods, with its deeply engraved or tomahawked reminiscences of Tha-yen-da-ne-gae.

Added to all these, with reference to the varied features of the Burgoyne campaign, were searchings among the ruins of the old fortifications at Ticonderoga, but even more than these, for this present story, were fishing excursions on Oneida Lake, and studies of the manner in which the British forces under St. Leger found their way from Oswego to the siege of Fort Schuyler and the bloody struggle in the woods at Oriskany.

It is not well to confine attention to what are called the great battles only, but every boy in America ought to acquire a deep and inquiring interest in the minor points of the heroic history of his country. No other land has produced braver or better men and women, and the boys and girls of to-day ought to be made familiar with the splendid examples which have been set for them.

WILLIAM O. STODDARD.

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THE FIGHT FOR THE VALLEY

CHAPTER I

THE FRONTIER BOY

“OH, Brom Roosevelt! Do come in! This is dreadful!”

She was a short, stout woman, and she stood in the porch of a neatly painted frame house, not many steps from the roadside. She was wiping her eyes with a corner of her apron, and she had called out to a sturdy-looking boy who had halted at the gate. His dress was not at all remarkable for that time and place, but it might have been considered so for some other times and places. He wore moccasins instead of shoes. Above these, reaching to the knee, were well-made woolen stockings. Then came what were sometimes called small-clothes, of blue woolen homespun; but his best garment was in his buckskin hunting-shirt, fringed all around and fastened at his throat by a broad brass buckle. On his head was a cap,

which was also made of buckskin. It was so dented on top and so turned up at the edges, with a flap behind, that if there had been a little more of the leather it would have passed for something like a cocked hat.

"What is the matter, Aunt Schuyler?" he shouted back, as he opened the gate to walk in. "Has anything happened?"

"Happened!" she echoed. "Why, Brom, that wretched boy Hon Yost has run away again. I'm afraid he has gone to Albany. Oh, dear! He was singing Tory songs all day yesterday. Then he disappeared."

"That's where he's gone!" exclaimed Brom. "I heard him say we were all rebels here and he was going to Albany to see the King. But, Aunt Schuyler, he isn't half so crazy as some people say he is."

"No, he isn't!" she responded. "He knows a great deal. He took some money of mine that I had put away in a closet, and he took a pony that belongs to your Uncle Herkimer. I had borrowed it, to do some errands with, and now I've got to go and see the general and tell him what has become of that pony. You had better go with me."

"Well," said Brom, thoughtfully, "he isn't really my uncle. He's only mother's cousin. You'd better take her with you than me. But he won't be so mad about the pony as he will about Hon. He's always been a trouble."

"So he has," she said; "and the other Tories stir him up, and you can't tell who's a Tory and who isn't, and there's dreadful news from the British army in Canada, and I don't know what we're to do."

"That's so," said Brom. "They say Burgoyne is coming. So are the Canada Indians. If they come, and if our Indians join 'em, there'll be fighting all up and down the Mohawk Valley."

"It's awful!" she groaned. But it was a pleasant day, and she never thought of putting on a hood or a wrap just to run to the Herkimer place.

Brom went with her, and they stopped at one house on the way. The tall, dark, intelligent-looking woman who joined them there did not appear to be greatly disturbed by Mrs. Schuyler's account of her troubles. She was so very cool that it was almost irritating.

"Anneke, dear," she said, "just what you might have expected. But Hon can do no harm at Albany. I don't think the general will care much for one pony just now. He is going to Albany, himself. I'm glad to go with you, anyhow, if it's only to hear what the news is."

"Mother," said Brom, "I've talked with three Oneida Indians this morning. I want to tell the general what they said to me."

"He might wish to know," she said; "but the Oneidas are friendly. It's the Western tribes that Brant and the

Johnsons are likely to bring against us. They are old enemies of ours."

Brom's face resembled hers and he was tall for his age, if he were not yet seventeen, but his blue-gray eyes and his brown hair may have come to him from his father's side of the family. As for the color of his face, the sun and wind had painted that, and made it even darker than hers. She was an exceedingly calm and self-possessed woman, but now, as she recalled the ancient feud between the settlers and the Iroquois, she stood still for a moment and gazed dreamily southward.

"The fort is there yet," she said, "but it is almost a ruin. That was in the old French War, when we were all English. They said we were. It is Fort Dayton now, but it was Fort Herkimer then. Your uncle was only a lieutenant, but he rallied the settlers and he held the fort against the French and Indians. All of us women and the children were inside of the stockade. We would all have been tomahawked if it hadn't been for Nicholas Herkimer."

She was thinking of old times and old perils, but Mrs. Schuyler was more interested in her runaway son just then, and urged her forward. As for Brom, he may have heard that story before, and he was a good deal more excited concerning any fighting which was likely to come into the valley at the present time. He did not know, however, how important was the fact that he and the two

women had not as yet spoken one word of the English language. The Dutch which they were using instead had in it a very complete chapter of American history. The first settlers of the Mohawk Valley had come from Holland. During sixty years more and more had followed. They had cleared the forests and opened farms and fought the red men, and had become almost a people by themselves, with strong prejudices against anything that was either French or English. The French and their Indian allies had been their foes on the north until 1763, when all the Canadas passed to the British Crown. Long before that the New Netherlands had done the same. In the year 1777, therefore, the Mohawk Valley had been under the flag of England for a hundred years, but most of its people were as Dutch as ever. What was more, the large numbers of immigrants who had poured in from New England were as un-English as any of the Boston boys or Israel Putnam's men. It was also true that a considerable number had come directly from the Old Country, and the most important part of these, many of them Scotch Highlanders, had been drawn over by Sir William Johnson and his family. His son, Sir John Johnson, his relatives, and a very few important Dutch families were now loyalists or Tories, with a strong following, but the great mass of the valley people were distinctively "Americans," with a traditional dislike to British rule. It may be said to have been born in them.

"What shall I say to him about Hon and the pony?" exclaimed Mrs. Schuyler, as the road they were following led them through a wide gateway, but Brom was thinking of other things, for he replied:

"Why, Aunt Anneke, this is Fort Herkimer now, and it would hold off a pretty strong tribe of Indians. It's better than that tumble-down old Fort Dayton. But that is to be built again, they say."

He was looking around as if to find out if this fort also were good for anything, and an army man would have told him that it needed much improvement. The Herkimer mansion, a large, two-storied building of heavy stonework, stood nearly in the middle of about two acres of land which had been surrounded by a strong palisade with a corner blockhouse. There were barns, outbuildings, and many evidences of worldly prosperity, but nevertheless here was a fine illustration of the fact that the home of every man upon the New York frontier might well be constructed with much reference to a probable attack at some time or other.

"Come along!" said his mother. "There is the general now, in the porch, and old Polly Winton, the housekeeper. She's a Tory, she is, and he must know it, too. What does he keep her for? What a tongue——"

She paused there, as may have been prudent, but it did appear as if an exceedingly animated conversation were

THE FRONTIER BOY

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going on in the Herkimer piazza. A robust, flaxen-haired woman was standing with her arms akimbo in front of an exceedingly vigorous-looking old man, and he was laughing at her.

"No, Nicholas Herkimer," she exclaimed, "I'm no Tory at all! I'm an Englishwoman. I was born one. It isn't a year yet since your Congress voted to turn me into something else, but they didn't change me a particle. What have they to do with me?"

"Why, Polly," responded the general, "you are an American. All this country isn't England any longer. We haven't any king."

"I have, then!" she said, almost fiercely. "You never were English; you are Dutch. I was born in Wiltshire, and oh, don't I wish I were back there again, out o' the way o' war and Indians!"

"Don't be afraid of them, Polly," he said. "You won't be hurt by them. Stick to your opinions; I can respect them. The people I hate are these hypocrites who pretend to be one thing when they're another. Hullo!"

He turned as he ceased speaking, for Brom and the two women were at the piazza steps, close by him. Old Polly Winton also turned her angry face toward them, muttering:

"I'm not a Tory. I was always a Whig. I'll not rebel against my king. Who has any right to make me, I'd like to know?"

She was entirely correct in her way of thinking, and such men as General Herkimer could respect her for adhering firmly to her convictions, but there were a great many who were not by any means so fair-minded. It had required only the two years of the war, thus far, to breed an intense bitterness of personal feeling upon both sides of the conflict. Old-time friends and neighbors, and even members of the same families, seemed in a large number of cases to be the most bitter foes of all.

Brom was a step or so in advance, and the general spoke first to him. "There you are!" he exclaimed. "I was going to send for you. Katrina Roosevelt, I want Brom. He must take a letter for me to Colonel Gansevoort, at Fort Schuyler. Then he must wait for an answer and bring it to me at Albany or at the camp at Stillwater."

"Will there be any danger?" she asked, with a shadow on her face. "His father and his brothers are with Washington. Seems to me that's enough."

"So it is! So it is!" said the general, heartily. "But the road is as safe as from here to the village. There are no British of any account this side of Lake Ontario. The Indians are peaceable——"

"That's what I want to talk about," said Brom. "I spoke to three Oneidas this morning, and they all talked about Tha-yen-da-ne-ga——"

"I saw them!" interrupted the general. "That red

murderer is up in Canada now, with Burgoyne. He will come again to do all the mischief he can, but he isn't near enough yet."

"Brom may go," said his mother, "but Anneke and I wanted to speak to you about Hon Yost and the pony. He has run away—"

"And taken the pony with him?" growled the general. "Well, we are pretty sure to get the pony back again, and if Hon fails to come back with him his mother will have so much less trouble."

"But I believe he has gone to Albany!" she almost sobbed.

"Well, well, Anneke," he said to her, not quite so harshly, "when I get there I will have him hunted up. He won't set the Hudson on fire. What harm can he do?"

"But about the pony—"

"You will have to do without him, and I don't need him," he said. "I have something bigger than a pony on my mind, just now. Katrina, Gansevoort may not have his despatches ready for three or four days. Fix Brom a knapsack. I will find him a pony."

She was looking at him at that moment, and there was a very beautiful light upon her face, for she knew that there would be danger, in spite of all that could be said. She had all her life lived among dangers, however, and she knew that they must come. Her boy was needed, and she

could not forbid him to do a duty which had come to him.

"O Brom," she whispered, "do be careful! You are all I have left!"

"I will, mother," he said, but there was a flash in his eyes and a tightening of his young lips, while her own eyes grew sadder and from her lips the redness seemed to be fading.

Mrs. Anneke Schuyler evidently felt relieved concerning both her runaway son and the animal he had taken with him. She turned to go and her friend went with her, but they were hardly down the steps again before she turned square around to exclaim:

"There, Katrina Roosevelt! I just envy you. I'm a widow woman and I haven't a son to serve my country with nor a husband nor a brother. My daughters are both married, but their husbands won't go. There won't be any danger for Brom, but he will be doing something. Burgoyne is coming——"

"Oh, dear me!" said Mrs. Roosevelt. "I forgot to ask about him. Perhaps Brom will know when he comes home. I don't care about Burgoyne."

There was a good deal to be said concerning the expected British invasion, but after all it was yet far away and it might never get into that part of the valley. It was more likely to strike the Albany and Hudson River

people and go on down to New York and be defeated by the army under Washington. It would be beaten, they believed, somehow.

Brom had remained for further orders from the general, and he did get a pretty full explanation of what was expected of him.

"You can bring me all that Gansevoort may send," he was told; "but you must use your own eyes and ears and be ready to tell me all you heard or saw. I don't believe Gansevoort himself knows just what the enemy is doing. He must find out, for General Schuyler has an idea that there is an expedition coming by way of Lake Ontario. It is only a rumor as yet, but we believe an attempt will be made to send the Six Nations in on us to keep us from reenforcing Schuyler. We are all in the dark, and there is going to be an awful amount of hard fighting this summer. I will have a pony ready for you to-morrow morning."

There was a curious natural reason why it was to be a pony. Nobody could say how many of the horses at first sent over from Europe had been large and how many had been small, but all over America, from the isthmus to the Hudson Bay country, there had been developed during a century and more of horse multiplication several nearly distinct breeds of undersized but hardy ponies. To this day the process has gone on, and in the North and West and South and on the plains there are hosts of them, in spite

of all efforts to replace them with larger animals. In the Mohawk Valley at that time, as in the Canadas and elsewhere, good farm horses were wanted for farm work, and the others might be bought cheaply.

Of course, the general questioned Brom as to all he had been told by his Indian acquaintances. It appeared that he even knew a great many Indian words and was able to make himself understood by them, by the aid of signs and of such English or Dutch as they had picked up. That made a talk with them a mixture of four languages, and there might be mistakes in it on both sides, but it was apparently plain that the Oneida tribe was inclined to resist the wiles of Tha-yen-da-ne-ga and to keep the peace as far as it could. During nearly a generation it had been upon good terms with the Dutch settlers, its oldest white acquaintances, while the Mohawks had fallen under the guidance of the Johnson family. The Onondagas and the western clans were also under Brant's influence, for although he had become a Mohawk war-chief he was by birth an Onondaga as well as, on his mother's side, a Mohawk. The Cayugas, Senecas, and Tuscaroras were willing to make war with anybody, treaty or no treaty. The power of the Iroquois confederacy had been lessened, but not broken. They still called all New York north and west of the Catskills and the Hudson their "Long House." It was bounded on the north by the Adirondacks and the Al-

gonquin tribes, and it extended into Pennsylvania and Ohio to an indefinite line guarded by the Susquehannocks and a few other independent nations not yet destroyed entirely but likely to be so in due time. The Mohawks were still distinguished as "the keepers of the eastern gate," the Senecas as "the keepers of the western gate," while the Onondagas still guarded the "sacred fire" in their central valley. With England for its ally, the league of the tribes might indeed be danger to the young republic.

CHAPTER II

READY FOR THE FIGHT

EVERY hour of the rest of that day was a long hour for Brom Roosevelt. Nobody could see that he was growing any taller, but he seemed to himself to be growing older. That was what he was doing, for he was thinking and imagining at a tremendous rate. He felt as if he had somehow been shut up inside of a great war, and now he was going to get right out into it. All he had ever seen or known of Indians and soldiers and war matters took on a new shape in his mind, and he was almost surprised to find, or to think he found, that he knew so much.

"Uncle Herkimer knows all about it," he said to himself. "He is an old soldier. So is General Schuyler. So is General Washington. I believe I can find out all that they want to know. I'll try it on, anyhow."

That was what he told his mother. She sighed deeply for a moment, and then he found that the war fever was upon her too, for she exclaimed:

"That is it, Brom. You must not mind me too much and you must not care too much for yourself. You must

serve your country. All the people in this valley may be swept away by the Tories and Indians. Even the women and the boys are bound to do all they can. I'm glad you are going. Get back safe, but don't you miss any chance that comes along."

Brom was cleaning his rifle when she said that, and it sounded very much as if she had been telling him:

"Don't you miss a redcoat or an Indian or a Tory. Shoot straight!"

It was a pretty good rifle that had belonged to his father, and it carried a heavier ball than the ordinary squirrel rifles owned by other boys whom he knew. A good deal of that afternoon and evening was spent in melting lead and running bullets, until his pouch was almost full. If every one of them was to hit an enemy, the British army was likely to need reenforcements, and something like that was true of all the balls that were being molded on both sides, but it is not every bullet that hits. Somebody has made a calculation that in gunpowder battles it takes a man's weight in lead to kill him. One ounce does it, and the rest of the lead is fired away into the country. Brom was up at daylight the next morning, but he found his mother up before him. Perhaps that was because she had not been asleep at all, but she made it as easy as she could for him to get away from her, and then she sat down and cried.

Old Polly Winton was the first person to meet him

when he reached the Herkimer place, and he forgot that he believed her to be a Tory when she said to him:

"O Brom, it's an awful time when boys like you have to go a-fighting! All I have to say is, I hope the valley men will keep the Indians away. I wish I were back in old England, where there isn't any war!"

"And I wish all the British soldiers were back there, too," replied Brom. "The war won't be over till they go."

"I guess that's true," she said. "Well, go out to the barn. The general went out to see about your pony, and he'll be waiting for you."

Brom went, and there was the general himself, holding the bridle of a small black quadruped that had a peculiarly well-fed look.

"Glad you are on time," he said, holding out a long, thin leather wallet. "Here are the letters for Colonel Gansevoort at the fort. Put them under your belt; inside your buckskin. Ride till noon, and then give your horse a good feed and a long rest. You ought to get there this evening, but you won't if you use up your pony by going too fast. Take it easy."

He gave other instructions for the way, and then Brom was in the saddle. If he was in a fever of impatience his pony was not. He went on when he was whipped, and was evidently disposed to obey the general's orders as to taking it easy, but neither he nor his rider could have guessed

what a very important errand they were bound on. So far as anybody was to be told, indeed, it was only a trip to the fort to see some friends in the garrison, and no person met by the way, whether Whig or Tory, was to know that it included military despatches for Colonel Gansevoort. Perhaps General Herkimer had thought twice about that and had concluded that while a man, especially a man in uniform, might have been suspected of having army letters about him, a boy of Brom's age would not.

When noon came and a halt was made at a farmhouse, Brom made a rough calculation that he had traveled during five hours at a rate of almost six miles an hour, counting rests.

"That is nearly thirty miles," he thought. "I can rest for two hours and then I can get to the fort before night. This is the Herman place——"

At that moment he was loudly hailed from the house, and hardly had he dismounted before he began to find out that while it was quite possible for both him and his pony to be heartily fed and rested there, the pony was likely to do most of the resting. That is, if it can be called hard work to answer all the questions that a frontiersman and a large family entirely out of news are able to ask. They seemed to think of everything, and much that Brom could tell about Burgoyne and Schuyler and their armies was altogether fresh. So were a great many things from as

far away as General Washington's camps at New York, and there was not one item of it all that could be let go with once telling. On the other hand, Mr. Herman could assure his young guest that all that region was as peaceful as Sunday. The Indians came and went as usual and were really friendly. He himself had been at Fort Schuyler only a few days before, and not a word had been heard among the men there about any movement of the British.

"All quiet," he said; "but the colonel is worrying the life out of the garrison, making them dig trenches and throw up breastworks when there isn't any kind of need of any such thing. It's all wasted. General Burgoyne is coming down by way of Lake Champlain. He'll get himself choked off at old Fort Ticonderoga, too. He can't begin to take that. Why, my boy, I've seen it myself. It's the strongest kind of place. There's been a good many men killed trying to capture Ti."

Brom knew from what his uncle had said that precisely that sort of ignorant overconfidence was in the way of getting men for General Schuyler's army, but he did not say so. He only finished his budget of news and set out once more on a pony that was readier to take it easy than he had been in the morning.

On he went, however, and he found the road as peaceful as Mr. Herman had told him it would be. He did not see or hear one thing which would have given his mother

any uneasiness. When, at a little before sunset, he came in sight of the fort, and plodded on toward the open road-gate in the tall stockade, he had not encountered so much as a scout or a patrolling party. The first sign of war times was when the guard at the gate halted him and would not let him in until he told his business.

"That's as good as a countersign," said the guard; and Brom did not know that the rules of army discipline required that man to summon an officer before admitting an entire stranger.

Brom dismounted and hitched his tired pony as soon as he found a post that would do. Then he was taking a long, curious look around him when he saw a man in uniform striding toward him from the front of the largest of a number of log houses which had been built within the very extensive enclosure. Some of these were long, and might be for soldiers' barracks. Others were like the houses of the farmers, and he saw what he knew to be blockhouses or log forts in the corners. Work for the day must have ended, for he saw none going on, and soldiers in and out of uniform were lounging around in all directions. There were women and children, too, and some of these came to the doors of the nearest houses to stare at him. He had just taken note of some cannon when he was hailed:

"Come this way, sir. I know you. I saw you once at Herkimer's. Come to my quarters. Despatches?"

"From General Herkimer," said Brom, not touching his cap, but taking it off. "Two letters from General Schuyler. There is a copy of another from General Washington."

The tall man in the uniform of the Continental army was no less a man than Colonel Peter Gansevoort himself, the commander of the fort, and he turned square around and halted as he exclaimed:

"Bless my soul! What does your uncle mean? What if you had been taken with those things on you? It would have been a disaster!"

"Why, your Excellency," stammered Brom, "there wasn't any danger. I had no trouble at all in getting here."

"You might have had," said the colonel, with a look of relief on his face. "I believe that road is watched for despatch-bearers. Things are dark enough here. I dare not send patrols far into the woods. Every man in the fort is on the lookout against surprise."

They had walked on almost to the entrance of the colonel's quarters, but Brom paused for another glance at what seemed that lounging lot of soldiers. Now, for the first time, he took note that every one of them had his rifle with him, ready for instant use. At this moment, too, he saw perhaps forty of them forming in good order and marching toward the largest blockhouse, in the corner

farthest from the river-front. In another corner was an earthwork redoubt, or a citadel fort inside of the large enclosure. He was afterward told that those soldiers were the guard for the night.

"Give me your despatches!" curtly commanded the colonel, as soon as they were in an inner room. "Oh, how I hope there is help coming! We are strengthening our defenses, but we haven't men enough to hold this place against a single regiment of British regulars. It might be taken any day."

He was silent then until he had opened the wallet and had read all the papers in it, going very slowly over some of them.

"That will do," he said, gloomily. "This leaves me, for the present, as badly off as I was before. I can answer one of Schuyler's questions, however. I do not know anything of what the enemy are doing beyond the nearest corner of Oneida Lake. I have sent spies as far as Oswego, but not one of them has come back. Do you remember old Kraus, of Little Falls?"

"I've known him all my life," said Brom; "but he's a Tory."

"I hope the enemy believe that he is," replied Gansevoort. "Then he may escape with his life. I sent him to Oswego a number of days ago, and now must send a canoe party to meet him at the head of Oneida Lake. It

will be a dangerous duty, but he was not to risk coming back through the woods. The party must set out to-morrow."

There was a sudden gleam in Brom's face, and he eagerly exclaimed:

"That is just what Uncle Nicholas ordered me to do, so that I could tell him what I had seen. I can paddle a canoe."

"All right!" said the colonel. "Two good men will go with you. I don't think there will be too much risk, if you are careful."

What he may have meant by that was that all the Americans in that neighborhood were risking their lives all the while and a little more peril did not signify. Somebody must go after Kraus, danger or no danger. He had a good many other things to say and questions to ask. Brom was sent out to get some supper and to answer the questions of scores of the soldiers, and then he was tired enough to lie down and sleep, in spite of a strong excitement which was increasing within him as he thought of the wonderful adventure which seemed to have been offered him.

No alarm disturbed the garrison of Fort Schuyler that night, and when Brom arose and went out in the morning his first impressions of the quiet character of the place came back upon him. It did not seem possible that all these unconcerned and talkative men were listening for possible

war-whoops, or that the women and children were in any real danger of being killed and scalped. Even an inexperienced observer could see, nevertheless, that the fort was in a sadly incomplete condition. There was too much of it, anyway, for a garrison that did not then exceed two hundred. Brom walked to the front toward the river with one of the soldiers.

"Look there, my boy," he said, "all that sweep of land, down to the river, was just natural meadow. Not a tree had to be cut down on it. It's all in wheat now, and there was good reason for not planting corn."

"What's that?" asked Brom. "Corn's as good a crop as wheat."

"It might be twice too good," laughed the soldier. "If it was in corn, good and high, what a cover it would make for a redskin to crawl up through and pick off a sentry! I was told that they tried that once, when this was Fort Stanwix, in the old time, before the name was changed. They had to cut down every stalk of that corn. Bad as woods for cover."

Brom could see that wheat was not so objectionable. The fort stood on a slight elevation, with the land sloping away from it in all directions, and a rifleman on a block-house roof could discover the approach of any intruder unless he were concealed by something as dense as the stalks and leaves of well-grown maize. More than one

other member of the garrison joined them, for the subject under discussion was of general interest, and it led them next to the opposite front of the fort, looking toward the forest, and here Brom had to listen to something like practical lectures from experts as to the war precautions needed at a post liable to attacks from the Iroquois or any other prowling red men. When old Fort Stanwix was built, they said, what there was of it, almost the first thing to be done was to clear away the woods to beyond long rifle-range.

"Do you see what we are doing now?" asked one of them. "The old stumps were pretty well rotted, but there was trash left and bushes had come up. We are widening the open and we are clearing away and burning up any sort of thing that would hide a redskin creeper. If we didn't, a patrol might be ambushed and shot down any day, and we would never dare, with what force we now have, to follow the shooter into those woods."

That was a black way of looking at that bit of partly improved land, and the fires which were still smoking made it look blacker. Brom stared at it until he could all but imagine that he saw the scalp-lock of a lurking warrior rising behind one of those columns of smoke. He had plenty to think of that day, at all events, and evening had not come when he was again summoned to the headquarters of Colonel Gansevoort. He went in a fever of expectation, but when he got there he found the veteran com-

mander as cool as a cucumber, for the affair that he had on hand was only a part of his ordinary military business.

Two other men were present, and neither of them was in uniform, unless buckskin hunting-shirts might be so considered.

"Brom Roosevelt," said the colonel, without any other form of introduction, "you are to go with Dutcher and Martens. They know where to go. You are to get Kraus and bring him back, if you can; but if the look of things is bad you are not to linger anywhere. See all you can and come away with your hair on your heads. They are both old scouts. You are to leave the fort now, and you are to go down the lake in the night."

He had other things to say, but the two men were almost silent. Both were elderly men, and it occurred to Brom that they might have seen any amount of scouting duty. They were broad-shouldered, strongly built fellows, with grizzled heads and bronzed faces, and there were indications that they were not over well pleased to have the company of a youngster.

Once they were out of the house, however, the man Dutcher turned to Brom and remarked:

"It's all well enough, my boy, since it's the colonel's orders. You are a nephew of General Herkimer? Well, I guess I knew him before you did. I was with him in the fort when he beat off the French and Indians, many

a long year ago. He did it first-rate, too; but he couldn't have held Fort Herkimer if the enemy had brought cannon. That's what we are to be afraid of here. The British can fetch them down Ontario Lake to Oswego, and up the Oswego River to the Oneida River, and on into Oneida Lake. If they can manage to bring them up the lake, it's a good wagon-road to the front door of this fort and nothing to stop them. We are to have a hot time here one of these days, or I'm mistaken."

"Shut up, Dutcher!" said Martens. "We three have got to reach the northeast corner of Oneida Lake before midnight, and there's no time to lose. The paddle down the lake 'll be easy work after that."

Brom was looking at him while he spoke, and was not half sure whether he liked him or not. There was no swagger or bravado about him, but if ever any man's face indicated the most reckless daring it was that of Tom Martens. It was like going into danger to be anywhere with such a comrade, and he was evidently the commander of the expedition.

If any of the garrison or the guard at the gate had an idea of where these three were bound, no remarks were made, and Martens led the way across the open and into the woods.

"We must keep out of the road, I suppose," began Dutcher, but his companion interrupted him sharply with:

"No, we won't! That would lengthen the trip, making us pick our way through the woods. I don't believe there's an enemy this side of the lake, especially if the colonel is right and if the British are coming. They won't send on any notice in advance. They'd want us to suppose that all things are quiet. We can push right on along a path that we can follow after dark."

"Seems to me kind o' risky!" said Dutcher; but he made no further objection, and in a few minutes more they were walking rapidly in a road which was lined here and there by bushes and everywhere by trees that might conceal warriors from the wild tribes or bitter-hearted Tories from the valley. Brom could not help using his eyes continually, and every now and then a thrill went over him as he thought he heard something; but Martens and Dutcher walked along as unconcernedly as if they had been in one of the streets of Albany.

CHAPTER III

A GREAT DISCOVERY

"HERE we are!" said Brom, as he and his friends came out from under the trees on the margin of a narrow stream. "Where are the canoes?"

"We can find them," replied Dutcher. "Colonel Gansevoort has an arrangement with the Oneidas to use them at any time. That is, those that are kept here. Most of their craft are over on the southeast corner of the lake in the creek. We don't want to go there. We might meet something worse than Oneidas."

Martens was ahead of them and seemed to be searching among the bushes. In a minute or so more he sent back at them a low whistle, and they hastened to join him.

"What's up, Tom?" whispered Dutcher. "Anything wrong?"

"I should say there was!" he growled. "These two canoes are not the ones I was to find. They belong to another lot of redskins, but we must take them. All is fair in war. I never saw this pair before."

They were good-looking boats, nevertheless. One was of full size and the other was smaller, but a very pretty one. Both had paddles lying in them, and Martens examined these with care.

"Dutcher," he said, "we must get away. These paddles have been in the water not long ago. The braves that used them are not far away. Get into the little one, Brom. He and I will take the other."

"Do we need them both?" asked Brom.

"Need them?" muttered Martens. "If there were a dozen here I'd take them all. We don't mean to be followed."

In they went, and the two birch-bark spoils of war were quickly out of the creek and gliding on over the not very smooth water of the lake. It was near midnight and the sky was cloudy, so that as soon as they were well out from land they had become invisible.

Neither could they see what was going on among the bushes where they had captured their prizes, or they might have been still better pleased at being so far away. The woods at that point were no longer altogether silent. The stillness had first been broken by a startled whoop, and this had shortly been followed by a chorus of grunts and exclamations. Then a war-party of half a dozen Onondaga warriors darted back under the cover of the forest with a strong suspicion in their minds that there might be ene-

mies close at hand. The absence of their canoes was a warning, and they knew all about traps and ambushes.

Not any had been set for them, and Brom was plying his paddle with a good deal of surprise at the ease and swiftness with which he could send that buoyant little affair over the water. Martens and Dutcher were also paddling steadily, and they were pointing right out into the middle of the lake, in spite of an objection made by Dutcher.

"You are all wrong," Martens told him. "It was just as I said it would be. The road was clear and safe. We were not expected, and so nobody cared to sit up for us. Any Indian canoe parties will be inshore at this time o' night, and the lake is as clear as the road was."

It might be, but then he did not know all about the Onondagas, and he knew very little of what was doing upon that gloomy sheet of water. No doubt it was all the safer for them that night because it was so gloomy. They had paddled on perhaps for an hour when Brom himself exclaimed:

"Martens, away to the left there! Look!"

"That's so," said Martens. "We'll take to the right. Your young eyes are better than mine. I'd have missed them. Can you see more than one?"

Brom watched in silence for a moment. There were dim, ghostly shapes out yonder, and they seemed to be coming nearer.

"Four—five—six," he then said. "All in a string going up the lake."

"We might have pulled right in among them," said Dutcher. "I told you we were too far out. I reckon those fellows are going on to scout around the fort. There may be more of them."

"Well," said Martens, coolly, "if that's their errand they won't chase us. Paddle your best now, Brom."

That was what they were all doing, but perhaps the best of several reasons why they got away from that squadron of hostile cruisers was that they had not been seen at all. Every now and then after that Brom was almost sure that he saw long, dark streaks which might be canoes among the shadows he was watching into, but none of them came near enough to give him any serious trouble. He did not feel any safer on that account, for he could not guess what was coming next, and even Martens had declared that they were now close to their worst danger. Hours had gone by, and the work had been more than a little fatiguing. It would have been more so but for the excitement, and Brom was glad when at last Martens took in his paddle and both canoes lay still for a moment.

"Dutcher! Brom!" said Martens, after a long, silent stare westward. "That's it. Look hard and you'll see it. We know something now. The British or the Tories, or both, are at this end of the lake."

"How do you make it out?" asked Dutcher. "I can't see anything."

"Can't you?" said the sagacious old scout. "I can. Look again. That isn't any star away yonder, and it isn't a fire. It's a red signal-lantern. No Indian ever hung out one. We needn't go any farther, though. We are right at the point that runs out at this end of the bay at the foot of the lake. Kraus was to meet us just inside the point. Big rocks, you know. I remember where they are. I've hunted all around here. The sooner we are on shore the better."

They took up their paddles again, and now they seemed to be going past a great shadow at their right. Beyond that was something like a cove, and they almost held their breaths as they slipped stealthily nearer and nearer to a shore which might be full of enemies. That is, they were either running into a hiding-place or into sudden and certain death.

"This will do," said Martens. "Rushes and bushes and high ground beyond them. We've had some close escapes to-night."

The large canoe went in first, and Brom followed with a curious idea in his mind that he would rather be holding a rifle than a paddle. The margin of rushes was passed, and then the canoes were hauled entirely out of the water and in among the bushes.

"We must lie down right here," said Martens, "and wait for daylight. This place is as dark as a pocket, and it isn't safe to go in a yard."

Down they lay, and Brom Roosevelt could not have told just how very few minutes passed before he was sound asleep, in spite of the possible nearness of a British army or a tribe of Indians. When his eyes opened again they did so only after he had received two or three vigorous shakes from a strong hand on his shoulder.

"Wake up!" said a rough, but friendly voice. "If I were a redskin, you might not have waked up at all. Don't you know me?"

Brom had been staring at him in undisguised astonishment, and he turned to look around after his two friends before he exclaimed:

"Of course I do. You are Jacob Kraus. I didn't expect to find you so soon as this. We were to hunt after you."

"Old Martens did that," laughed Kraus; "and he didn't need any help from you, for I was hunting after him. Get up and eat something. I don't believe General Herkimer meant to have you sent on such an errand as this. He'll hold Gansevoort to account for it. The British are here!"

Brom sprang to his feet in a twinkling, and he forgot to explain how he came to be there in his eagerness to hear

Kraus's account of himself. At the same time he felt that something to eat was decidedly in order, he did not care much what it might be, and it was while he was attending to a cold breakfast that Kraus calmly remarked:

"Now there isn't much chance for any of this crew to get back to the fort. Perhaps one of us may. So each one ought to know all there is to know, and be able to report it when he gets in. I'll go over it all."

"Don't miss anything," said Martens. "And, Brom, you must listen, too."

He was likely to do that, for he did not consider himself of less importance as a war reporter than any other member of that party. One of the first things he learned was that just before daylight Martens had crawled out from among the bushes, and had found the rocks he was looking for. Then he had nothing more to do than to whistle three times at short intervals, and Kraus had crept out from another thicket where he had been lying for more than a day.

"I believe the red rascals found my trail," he said, "and they searched within a hundred feet of me. You see, I went up to Oswegatchie on one of the schooners to find out what they were doing. Butler's Tories were there, and one of them told the British I ought to be watched. Then I came back to Oswego, and a friend of mine warned me that I was to be arrested for a spy. I knew what that

would mean, and I took to the woods. I didn't dare to go farther than this, though, for they were after me. I couldn't even steal a canoe, and I thought it was all up with me. Perhaps it is, but I found out loads of things. I tell you what, it means mischief to Fort Schuyler when they are building broad scow keel-boats right in there at the foot of the lake to transport St. Leger's cannon on. He is to command, and not Sir John Johnson. He has four hundred regulars camped now on the other side of this bay."

"Can't he fetch boats enough into this lake without building any more?" asked Dutcher. "He could fetch pretty big ones, too."

"Big enough for men and some other things," said Kraus; "but the weather on Oneida Lake is uncertain, and he won't run the risk of one of those narrow scows capsizing and sending a cannon to the bottom. Besides, it's no great job to knock together one of those keel-boats. All the lumber can be fetched up from the Oswego mills. They are pretty near ready now."

Kraus had a great many more particulars to relate, and Brom Roosevelt did not lose one of them. He almost felt that he was himself planning a deep campaign to defeat St. Leger now that the secret of that officer's plans and preparations had been discovered. The main thing in the way, as far as his military genius would enable him to

calculate, was that he would need several times more men than the garrison of Fort Schuyler could give him. Kraus was really a good story-teller as well as a daring spy, and his narrative of the places where he had been and the men he had seen was as good as a novel. That, however, was a comparison which Brom could not have made, for the days of novels and of illustrated magazines had not yet come to the boys of America. Nobody then living could have so much as dreamed how vast an amount of printing was yet to be caused, both of fiction and history, by the very war in which Brom and his companions were running such a tremendous risk that day.

"We must lie still till dark," Martens had said. "If we are not discovered before then we can paddle out, and they may mistake our canoes for some of their own. That's about all we can do."

It was not quite all, for Kraus could go over and over his budget of information, and Brom ventured to creep up upon a higher bit of ground and gazed out over the lake, to be astonished at finding how many canoes and other craft were coming and going. He had time for much thinking, too, and for being particularly glad that his mother knew nothing of all this.

It was true that Mrs. Roosevelt did not have any exact idea of where her boy might be or what he might be doing, but she knew that he had gone away from her and that

he was out there somewhere, near the edge of the war, so to speak. It was all a great doubt and a growing anxiety, and at last she left her house and went up to the Herkimer place with a dim notion that perhaps a talk with the general might be a relief to her. She was not altogether disappointed, although the only person she met, except a servant, was old Polly Winton, who came down-stairs to tell her that the general had gone to Stillwater to meet General Schuyler.

“O Polly!” exclaimed Mrs. Roosevelt; “I am so sorry! I wanted to see him about Brom. I do feel so anxious about him.”

“So do I,” said Polly, with emphasis. “I always thought a great deal of that boy. I told the general he ought never to have sent so young a fellow as he is to that awful fort. Oh, this war is dreadful!”

In an instant both of those good women had forgotten that they were enemies. They almost hugged each other, Whig or Tory, and they sat down for a long talk over the terrible thing that it was to have old neighbors ready to shoot each other and to bring in the Indians. General Herkimer himself could not have done anything half so good for Brom’s mother.

As for him, it was a long, long day. The shadows of evening came at last, and there was supposed to be less peril in getting up and moving around among the trees.

Brom was more confident on that point than were his more experienced associates, for he ventured to walk quite a distance into the forest to get rid of his restlessness. He was standing under a tree thinking it was about time to go back, when something startled him. He heard a sound that might have been a human voice, and then he saw a small gleam of light. He stepped behind the tree and watched, and the gleam grew brighter while the voices grew louder, for there were several of them, and they were talking freely. Then a swift blaze shot up, and its light fell in a brilliant flood on both sides of his tree, for an increasing party of Indians in their war-paint were kindling a camp-fire and preparing to cook a deer which they had killed.

"They are awfully near," thought Brom; "but I guess I can get away if I can keep the trunk of the tree between me and that firelight."

Of course he was able to do that, but he should have watched other things as closely as he did the dangerous blaze. If he had done so he might have avoided putting his foot upon a dry, brittle branch, which broke under his weight with a loud snap that was heard by every one of those quick-eared red men. Not a whoop was uttered, but they were all on their feet and springing away among the trees, for their first instinct was to escape from a glare by means of which some lurking foe might draw a bead on one of them. Off went Brom, not more carefully, but a good

deal more rapidly. He reached the spot where he had left his friends, but they had vanished, for they, too, had seen a light and had raced toward the shore without so much as a whistle.

"The boats!" gasped Brom. "If I can get to them!"

That was but a short run to make, but when he reached the shore the larger canoe was already in the water with three boatmen at the paddles.

"I can shove mine in," said Brom, bravely, and he had never in his life felt quite so strong as he did when he took hold of that little canoe.

In it went and out through the margin of rushes, but there a low voice came to him from a dark place near by:

"Halt! Lie down in your boat. Work it this way and tell us what you have seen. We are going toward the point. Keep in the shadow or they'll see you. It's our last chance."

Brom dropped as he was told, but with one hand and a short paddle over the side of the canoe to propel it, while loud whoops on the shore announced that some traces of their presence there had been discovered.

"We didn't get away a minute too soon," growled Martens, as the two canoes came together. "How many are there of them?"

"I counted twenty," said Brom, "and there may be

more. They were close behind me. What are we to do now?"

"Can't tell till we reach the point," said Martens. "That may be a party that was out after Kraus. All the canoes on the lake will be warned that there is a spy around. I'm glad there's a bluff to keep under. We can work along fifty yards more, and then we may sit up and paddle our best."

The whooping on the shore continued at intervals, but it was a kind of guide after all, for it informed them that none of the whoopers were near enough to do any harm. The fifty yards were rapidly made, and then the fugitives were under the temporary protection of the beetling cliff.

"Halt!" said Kraus. "Oh, if it were only a cloudy night! Brom Roosevelt, we three can send this boat along twice as fast as you can paddle that one. Don't try to keep up with us or to follow us."

"No," said Martens, "that would throw him away. He had better keep in alongshore. Sorry, but it's the best that can be done for him."

CHAPTER IV

PERIL

THE surface of Oneida Lake was beautifully serene that calm night in the eventful year 1777. The moon was nearly full, and objects at a considerable distance across the water could be seen distinctly. Brom Roosevelt sat still in his canoe for a moment, paddle in hand. His heart was beating hard, for it was a terrible thing to be left all alone under such circumstances. Then his courage began to come back, and with it a sudden willingness not to follow those three men.

“That Martens is such a complete daredevil,” he said to himself, “he will take any kind of risk.”

“Don’t stir,” said Dutcher, “till we get well away.”

“I won’t,” said Brom. “Good-by. I hope you’ll all get through.”

“Good-by, Brom,” they said, one after another, and then their canoe glided swiftly out into the moonlight.

“I can understand what Martens means to do,” thought Brom. “I heard what he said to Kraus. There are a good many boats out yonder going up the lake. He means to make believe that he belongs to that lot and run

right along with them. I'll wait here till I see how he does it."

If that was indeed the idea of Tom Martens it was cunning as well as daring. It might have succeeded, possibly, if it had not been for whoops on the shore which arose when he and his two friends got out to where they could be seen. Whoop after whoop answered them from away out on the water, and Brom exclaimed, sorrowfully:

"It won't do! It's too late! They've been discovered!"

If he had been near enough just then he might have heard Martens say:

"Now, boys, we've half a mile the start. We can deal with any one boat-load. We'll give 'em a long chase, and it'll cost 'em something."

"I don't care what's behind us!" shouted back Dutcher. "But look ahead! My God, it's all over with us! Let's die fighting!"

Right in their pathway flashed on under the bright moonlight no less than three more canoes as full of wild shapes as those which were behind them, and the long chase was not to be made. It was not yet so far that Brom, sitting in his canoe under the shadow of the point, could not hear the fierce yelling, and then the rattle of rifle-shots, with which the red destroyers closed upon their victims. It made him feel so sick and faint that he could

not utter a word, and he put his hands before his eyes as if to keep from seeing what he knew must be coming.

It all came very quickly. The swift motion and the uncertain light had prevented good marksmanship. When the first canoe of their foes reached them Kraus and Dutcher appeared to be unhurt, for they rose to their feet. Every gun on both sides was empty, and it was to be hand to hand now. Martens had caught up an ax and was leaning over the side.

"Boys," he groaned, "I've got it. I'm dying, but I'll give them this!"

Down came the ax with all his remaining strength, not upon any Indian but upon the bark of that canoe, severing it as if it had been paper. It instantly began to sink, but a tall warrior sprang from it into the boat of the white men, and others followed quickly from the opposite side. All was over, but Brom Roosevelt had heard the death yell of the Iroquois. It came from one brave who fell there just as Kraus did, but another had previously been struck by a bullet, and there were three wounded. The scouts had indeed died fighting, and the Onondaga tribe had lost what it could not very well spare.

Loss of warriors was not by any means the received idea of savage war. The principal consideration that had been holding back the Six Nations from following Tha-yen-da-ne-gea into more active support of their "Great

Father," King George of England, was the probability that in collisions with the straight-shooting frontiersmen there would be as many killed on one side as on the other. The size of Burgoyne's army, the number of his cannon, and the added Tories and Canadians helped to overcome this reasonable objection, if these white soldiers were to be slaughtered and the red ones permitted to do the scalping and plundering. The allied tribes really had no braves to spare. Their muster-rolls had always been overestimated. If it was true that at a previous day they could rally two thousand full-grown warriors, their feuds with the Algonquin tribes and the Western Indians had seriously diminished that strength. Perhaps they had now fifteen hundred, leaving out the very old and the young.

Other boats were now to be seen coming up from the bay, and some of these appeared to be manned by white men. All were directing their course toward the scene of the naval skirmish, and this was the main reason why Brom Roosevelt succeeded in getting all the way around the dangerous point unseen. The hunted spy and his companions had been caught and killed, and no other enemy was supposed to be in that neighborhood.

"I must keep close inshore," thought Brom, "and I must be ready to go ashore, too. I believe it was the rashness of Tom Martens that threw away all three of them. I just knew I didn't want to be in his boat. I can

do a great deal better all alone. Poor fellows! It's awful to think of them!"

He could hardly make it seem real that they were dead, it was so very short a time since they had been talking with him. It was his first hard and sharp lesson in the terrible realities of war. He had heard a great deal, to be sure, but here he was actually in it, and there was no kind of assurance that he would be able to make his way out. Still, he was not showing any signs of nervousness, and that was a good point in his favor.

Not much more than an hour had passed by when, away back on the shore of the farther bay, an officer in the brilliant scarlet uniform of the British army, brilliant when it is nearly new, was listening to a report made to him through an interpreter by a furiously angry copper-colored chieftain. He had questions to ask, and at the end of it all he quietly remarked:

"Tell the chief I am sorry he lost his braves, but I am particularly glad that the rebel spies lost their scalps. Of course we shall never really surprise Fort Schuyler, but we don't want them to know what we are doing here until we are about ready to strike. We have a great errand on our hands. When we take that post we shall have the key to the whole valley, and there will be nothing left to prevent us marching down to meet Burgoyne on the bank of the Hudson."

If this captain of regulars was but repeating the frequent assertions of his commander, St. Leger had pretty good reasons for his confidence and his expectations. General Burgoyne was already on his way down Lake Champlain at the head of an army which was currently reported at over seven thousand men, without enumerating Canadians, Tories, or Indians. The forces which General Philip Schuyler was gathering to meet him were not as yet over thirty-five hundred, and it was feared that General Washington would be unable to prevent the rumored movement of Sir Henry Clinton's army from New York up the Hudson. If the understood plan of the British campaign were to be successfully carried out there would probably be a grand British, Tory, and Iroquois reunion at the mouth of the Mohawk River, and the rebellious province of New York would be permanently recovered to its rightful king. Undoubtedly Fort Schuyler, near what is now the city named after old Rome, was the military key of the whole valley. Less than half finished, and with only a fourth of its required garrison, if the British commander had had his bateaux on Oneida Lake that night to transport his men, with or without artillery, he could wisely have followed Brom Roosevelt with his whole force, and he would have had no difficulty at all in capturing the fort.

"Captain," broke in a deep voice a little behind the

officer, "that is all very well, but we ought to be at the other end of this lake, and not here. If we waste too much time the rebels may get ready for us."

"Sir John Johnson!" exclaimed the captain, turning on his feet. "I had no idea you were here. No doubt you are right, but our spies report that they are doing nothing of importance. They may believe that we are coming, but they don't know we are already here. As to going up the lake—bless my soul! How long it does take to get our boat lumber here and to make the roads fit for guns and wagons. I don't believe, though, that General Burgoyne will be able to complain of us for slowness. The woods will give him the same kind of trouble after he leaves Lake Champlain. He had all his flotilla ready at his hand, too."

"I wish ours were ready," responded Sir John. "Let me tell you, my friend, I am urging St. Leger to move at the earliest moment. If we had Fort Schuyler to-day we would have Fort Dayton at Little Falls within three days afterward. It would be a great recruiting station. All the sluggish Tories in western New York would wake up, and they and all the Indians in the woods would be rushing to join us. We could almost whip Schuyler without waiting for Burgoyne, if that would not be impolite."

"Sir John," laughed the captain, "I believe that is just what St. Leger would like to do, but the lumber ques-

tion is in the way. At all events, when our boats are ready they will save us the whole length of the lake, whatever it is, in road-cutting through woods. Bridge-building, too."

The baronet and his friend, with whom he appeared to be upon terms of some intimacy, exchanged congratulations upon the killing of the three spies of Colonel Gansevoort as a matter of special importance. If, however, they believed their operations in and about that bay to be as yet undiscovered, their belief might have been somewhat shaken if they had been boating along the north side of the lake instead of retiring, as they now did, to comfortable tents and undisturbed slumbers.

Brom had left far behind him the entire fleet of canoes and other craft which had fought with his friends or had gone ashore with the news of their destruction. He was now patiently working his way along at no great distance from the shore-line, and he was breathing more freely.

"I might keep farther out and run a straighter course and save work," he was saying to himself. "There isn't a canoe in sight. I wish I knew just how far I have come from the point at the bay."

He might have been farther if prudence had not compelled him to follow the indentations of the land, and now another outreachng point was near. He reached it, paddling slowly, and he was rejoiced to find that all the expanse of water beyond appeared to be unoccupied.

"I guess I'm going to get through!" he exclaimed.
"Hurrah!"

"Come ashore with that canoe!" came a loud, imperative hail from under the trees at the point. "Captain Epps of the Royal Greens."

"Sir John Johnson's own regiment!" exclaimed Brom. "Kraus said part of them are here and more are coming. He will bring Brant, too. I mustn't fail to reach Fort Schuyler with all this news. It's worth anything."

There might be a great deal of it and it might be increasing in value, but his chances for getting in with it were visibly diminishing. An order from a British officer, or even from a well-known Tory, as in this case, was sure of prompt obedience from any loyal servant of the British Crown, or from any other person supposed to have due reverence for military authority and flying lead. As if to make the matter of obedience doubly sure the order to come in was repeated in good Iroquois gutturals, so that it might be understood by a canoe which did not understand English. Nevertheless no answer came back, and either of the speakers on the beach was permitted to imagine, if he would, that the paddler out yonder was deaf or that his boat was getting away from him. It had quickly added a number of yards to its previous distance, and it apparently had an intention of putting on more of them.

"Come ashore or we'll fire on you!" shouted Captain

Epps, and this time he roared his order in sonorous Mohawk Dutch, just as he might have done if he had been near enough to have heard what tongue Brom and his three friends had employed before Martens and Kraus and Dutcher paddled away to be overwhelmed by their enemies.

"I guess I'm out at pretty long range already," Brom was thinking. "If I obeyed his orders I'd be shot or hung as soon as he could get me before Sir John or St. Leger. They wouldn't have any mercy on a rebel spy. That is what they would call me, and this news would never reach the fort. I'd better take this risk than the other."

He was paddling vigorously, and the canoe was flying fast at the moment when a volley of loud reports rang out from among the trees.

"Good!" said Brom. "Not rifles. English muskets. They don't carry any too far, but they throw big balls. Hullo! One shot struck the boat. I'm safe yet. It'll take them some time to load. I can get out of range before they are ready again. There, that's fine!"

He was looking up just then, and his encouragement came from a patriotic American cloud which was beginning to sweep across the face of the moon. Moreover, a breeze was springing up, the water was roughening, and he and his canoe were likely to be not so fair a mark. He was calculating how long it might take to load a musket,

and he was looking forward into a wide cove which opened before him, when he suddenly felt called upon to utter a loud and dismayed exclamation. He had not been hit, indeed, but he had discovered one of the most unpleasant of the many curious incidents which sometimes occur in naval warfare. The musket-ball, which had found a mark, had not actually gone through the tough, seasoned birch-bark, but it had loosened one of the strips with which an old break had been mended, and the water was beginning to come in. It was not coming so very fast, but there would soon be altogether too much of it for a crew that dared not leave paddling to do baling, and that had no means for plugging the leak. Sooner or later that canoe would surely contain a ruinous part of Oneida Lake, and would be unfit for further fighting.

"There is nothing else for it," groaned poor Brom; "I must go ashore. They are firing again, but they can't hit me. I don't believe they will dream that I'd take to the woods. I'm glad they're not Indians, but then some of Johnson's Tories are as good trailers as any Mohawk if they once got after me. I'll beat them, somehow."

Thicker grew the friendly cloud and rougher were the waves of the lake, but deeper also was the water around the feet of the young scout as he plied his paddle. He hated that water. For all he knew there might be more of the enemy among the very forest-trees to which he was

escaping. On the whole his position was of the most uncertain and unpleasant kind, when the nose of his ruined canoe ran up a pebbly beach and he stepped out of her. His knapsack, bullet-pouch, and powder-horn were quickly over his shoulder; he picked up his hatchet and rifle and darted into the woods. There did not appear to be much underbrush after leaving the line of bushes near the margin, but the night shadows were deep, and he drew a long breath of relief. Even if his approach to the shore had been seen or suspected, the land party would have to come all the way around the cove, and he had gained a considerable distance upon them. He did well, however, not to count too much upon that and to make his advantage longer as fast as he could, for Captain Epps was one of Johnson's best scouts, and he had almost taken for granted that another man as keen as himself would leave the lake under such circumstances, leak or no leak, to avoid pursuit. He and his party of nearly a dozen men, therefore, set out as soon as they had reloaded after firing their second volley, and they were making the best of their way along the shore. That they were there at all told of the vigilance with which Sir John, even more than St. Leger himself, was guarding the Oneida Lake invasion from untimely discovery or from possible attack by surprise. One more help came to Brom after the cloud had done what it could for him. The cove had the mouth of a marshy creek at

its head, and this compelled the Royal Greens and their captain to lose yet more of the distance which was so precious to the fugitive. Of course he could not travel at a racing pace among the huge trunks of the forest-trees and loaded as he was, but he knew quite enough to plunge at once inland and away from the lake shore. It was dark, too, and taking all things together he was in a pretty gloomy piece of woods for a fellow of his age and size. It was well indeed for good Mrs. Roosevelt that she had no knowledge whatever of the manner in which her absent son was spending this part of a night in the service of his country.

CHAPTER V

CLOSELY HUNTED

"I've a pretty long tramp before me," thought Brom, as he stood still to consider matters. "It might be ten more miles down the lake and there will be twenty beyond that. I can't make any straight lines, either. I suppose I'll be lucky if I get there inside of three days."

Perhaps he should have added that he would be something more than lucky if he succeeded in getting in at all, for now, as he again pushed onward, his pursuers reached the empty canoe at the shore and discovered why it had been left behind. The fact that not one of them uttered a shout or a whoop testified to their character as experienced woodsmen, and so did the next remark made by one of them to his leader.

"Captain Epps," he said, "I want to say something right here."

"Out with it," said the captain. "No greenhorn was in that boat."

"That's what I mean," replied the soldier. "He's an old hand. Fact is, any man that Peter Gansevoort

would send on such an errand would know just what to do. There isn't any use in following such a fellow at night. He's a full mile ahead now."

"Good!" said the veteran Tory. "And you haven't told the whole of it, after all. How far do you suppose we might trail him in the dark before he would lead us in among an ambuscade of old Herkimer's best riflemen? None of that for me, if you please. We were ordered to scout on to the foot of the lake anyhow, but I'll pick my way through these woods by daylight, now I've had full warning that the rebels are in them."

Every one of his men was in full accord with that prudent decision, and so the empty canoe had done all that was needful to protect the rear of Brom's lonely night march. He knew nothing about it, however, and he made his weary, stealthy way forward as much in the dark concerning what might be behind him as he certainly was as to the perils which were possibly lurking in the forest before him. It was needful to proceed with slow care to avoid running against trees or tumbling down ravines, of which there were many. One hour more of this kind of picking his way appeared to satisfy him, and he crawled into the thickest clump of bushes he could find. As he did so he declared that he was tired enough to sleep if the Indians were whooping all around him. He was in a safe bedchamber, nevertheless, for an Indian can not

see in the dark any better than a white man. He slept soundly, and when he awoke with the first rays of daylight that came down through the foliage above him he seemed to be in no kind of hurry to get out from his hiding-place. On the contrary, he lay quite still while he opened his knapsack and took out a big piece of cold roast deer-meat. No other sort of provisions came out with it, and he did not leave much of that venison for his next meal. Then he carefully examined his rifle, putting in fresh priming and picking the flint of the lock.

Slowly, cautiously, Brom crept out to the edge of the bushes and looked searchingly in all directions. He had not made a sound himself, but now he lifted his head quickly and appeared to be listening. Then his face brightened and he arose to his feet, exclaiming:

“Deer! A whole gang of them! Feeding, too. I began to feel better as soon as I heard the call of that buck. He’s on the watch now, but his head is down and he’s picking grass. That means that there isn’t an Indian or a Tory anywhere near me. I can go ahead.”

Very likely he would have been better contented if he had been out on the lake, gliding easily along in his canoe, but he was probably quite as safe here in the unbroken forest. No sound of a settler’s ax had yet been heard among the hills beyond him, for all this region was still the unquestioned property of the Oneida tribe, and

care had latterly been taken to avoid offending them. There had been a general understanding, nevertheless, that they were willing to make all they could out of both of the white combatants in this present war.

Except for his unpleasant belief that he himself was hunted, Brom was as entirely at home as if he had been out after game. That herd of deer was safe, however, for he would not for anything have disturbed the silence around him by the report of a rifle. Other ears than those of the watching buck might have heard any such notification of his presence. It was time to be moving, and he set out with a bright look upon his face. There was no traveled path, no old trail to follow, but primeval forest is apt to be reasonably clear of undergrowth for the greater part, and he could have marched on rapidly if it had not been for rocky ledges and fallen trees. There were streams, too, but none which did not have places here and there which were shallow enough for wading. Moreover, at each of these he took the pains to wade some distance either up-stream or down-stream, after the well-known Indian method for confusing a trail. This and all other precautions of the kind were what an old trailer like Captain Epps would have expected from one of Colonel Gansevoort's picked scouts, one of the best men he had, and it was the reason why none of Sir John Johnson's Royal Greens were poking around among the woods that morn-

ing after the owner of the canoe which they had captured and mended. It was almost as good as ever, after they had repaired the rent made by the chance bullet which had compelled Brom to go ashore.

Noon came, and Brom was sure that he was more than half-way down the lake. He had come out in sight of it again, and again on the headlands he had been climbing, but up to this hour he did not appear to have seen anything upon it that was of especial interest to himself. Now, however, it was time for him to take a long rest and to eat the remainder of his rations. He had halted upon a massive crag not more than a quarter of a mile from the shore. He had permitted plenty of game to pass him as he came along, for he had not wished to take on any more load than he was carrying, but as he finished his cold roast venison he admitted that it might be well for him to lay in a fresh supply before sunset.

"I guess," he said, "that it would be safe for me to kindle a fire then and to do some cooking. That is, if I got far enough away from the fire afterward. I wouldn't sleep near one."

However that might be for supplies and camp cookery and prudence, the next instant he was standing erect and gazing out upon the water.

"A boat with four men in it!" he exclaimed. "No, that can't be any of our men. Kraus and Martens and

Dutcher didn't get away. I wish I had a spyglass. They are pulling inshore. I can watch 'em safely enough. They won't see me, and they can't catch me."

They could not do so in that boat certainly, and now a spirit of genuine boyish fun, or perverseness, seemed to have seized upon Brom Roosevelt. He stood away out upon the rock and swung over his head a branch of a bush that he had cut off. It was as if he were daring them to come, but that was not really the idea that was in his head. The very spirit of mischief was dancing in his eyes, and he laughed aloud as he again and again swung his branch to make sure of being seen.

"They're coming!" he shouted. "I'll tolle them ashore. Then, if they're Gansevoort's men, it'll be all right, and if they're Tories they won't leave their boat for a tramp through the woods."

What he had not thought of was that one of the men in that canoe was an officer, and that he had the very spy-glass Brom was wishing for. At this moment it was aimed at the crag upon which the boy with a branch was standing, and it had hit him fairly.

"What do you make of him, lieutenant?" asked one of the men in as good Dutch as Brom himself could have spoken. "He can't be a rebel, I'd say. Mightn't he be one of Epps's men?"

"Not a bit of it," replied the lieutenant, "or he

wouldn't be calling for us. The rebels are not in as far as this, I think."

"Might be an ambuscade," doubtfully suggested another of the men.

"No," exclaimed the lieutenant, positively. "There goes the signal again. Three times and repeated. That means that he has been to Fort Schuyler and is on his way back to report. We will go ashore and try and strike a deer. Then we can take him along with us. I want to hear all he has to say about the fort."

So did his companions, and they said so, for they were out on the lake in the hope of learning something. Moreover, the British army authorities were naturally as curious about the condition and armament of Fort Schuyler as Colonel Gansevoort could be about any preparations for bringing King George's motley array of all sorts up Oneida Lake. Scouting parties were matters of course on both sides, but the British were quite sure that they had a vast advantage over the rebels in all that neighborhood. The men in the boat, therefore, could hardly have been accused of imprudence in pulling ashore after having had an apparently well-understood private army signal given them. Besides they were short of rations and the woods were full of deer, and for all they knew this friend of theirs on the crag might have been killing venison for them to come after. At all events, they were now

paddling along in perfect security of mind, and Brom had left his post for another among some trees, from which he might watch them without himself being seen, even with a spyglass. It was only a few minutes before the nose of that canoe was on the beach, and he laughed aloud as he saw its crew get out and pull it up half-way out of the water.

"Johnson's Royal Greens, every man of them!" he exclaimed. "One of them's an officer in uniform. I wonder if that big fellow isn't old Krupp from below Little Falls? Oh, but wouldn't Uncle Herkimer hang him if he caught him! Hullo! The fools are leaving their boat! Now for it!"

His sunburned face flushed a brilliant red for a moment, and then it turned pale with the excitement which came upon him along with a brand new idea which was rising in his busy brain. Back he went among the trees, and he made his way rapidly downward, going as far to the right as he had seen his enemies go toward the left. He was silent now and his teeth were set like those of a steel trap, but the military boating party were all the while talking freely. They did not fail to shout heartily to their supposed comrade to come and meet them—which he did not care to do. He was coming down, indeed, but not with the least idea in the world of shaking hands with any of them, however much they would have rejoiced to

have done so, and then to have shot him, it may be, for a rebel spy.

The canoe had been beached upon an outreaching tongue of land, and when its crew had gone on as far as the foot of the crag they were already well beyond musket-range, twice over. They were in no great hurry, but another fellow was in desperate haste, and he was making his way rapidly out among the concealing trees.

"I mustn't shake a bush for them to see," he said. "They're all old deer hunters, and they'd understand it in a moment."

Not a quiver of a branch, therefore, told them of the whereabouts of the daring youngster who had so impudently signaled them, and their canoe was entirely hidden from their eyes when his eager hands grasped it and it began to slide back into the water. They had taken their weapons with them of course, and the canoe at a first glance did not appear to contain anything worth stealing; but Brom was not thinking of such matters, for he was trying his best to paddle away in a direction which would keep a clump of trees between him and the foot of the crag as long as might be possible. He succeeded so well that he was a good quarter of a mile out before four angry yells arose almost simultaneously from the throats of the plundered crew of that "scout-boat." Oh, how vigorously they continued to express their bad opinion of the venturesome

rebel who had taken it away from them. He was, in their prejudiced eyes, a villain who was worthy to be burned at the stake by the Mohawks and then hung by the Tories. Two of them even gave up Dutch and tried to employ English to do the difficult subject fair justice. There was their canoe, however, in spite of all they could say, and it was getting farther and farther beyond any hope of recovery with every stroke of Brom Roosevelt's paddle.

"I guess I'm all right now," he was coolly remarking, as he took a thoughtful measure of the distance between him and the shore. "Nothing but a cannon would reach me, and they didn't have any cannon. Now, I wish I knew if there were any more British boats at this end of the lake. It isn't the end either. It may not be more than half-way. Hullo! They did leave some of their things behind them."

It seemed perfectly safe now for him to halt long enough for an inspection of his prizes, if he had any.

"Two good axes," he said; "first-rate camp-kettle, long-handled spear, musket and bayonet and cartridge-box, hatchet, blankets, four of them. I say, whoop! That's what I wanted. That officer went off and left his spyglass. Who would have thought it!"

Nobody would, not even the owner himself, if the shoulder-strap by which it was usually carried had not been accidentally broken. Even then the lieutenant ought at

once to have done what Brom now did, and to have mended it neatly with a strip of buckskin cut from his hunting-shirt—only that the gentleman in the gay green uniform did not wear any buckskin.

The first use that Brom made of this valuable acquisition was to take a long survey of the land he had left behind him.

“There they come,” he said. “They won’t swim out after me. They’ll have to find their way back to camp on foot.”

His next telescopic survey was up and down the lake, and here he discovered something which had no fun in it whatever. Away southerly, almost in the middle of the lake, there were dark spots on the water. That was what they might have looked like to the naked eye, but Brom’s new Tory spyglass made an altogether different affair of them.

“No,” he declared, after a long look at them. “They are not canoes and they are not common scow-boats. Those are some of the things that Kraus said the British are building up at the other end of the lake. They are a kind of sail-boat, and they can travel faster than I can make this heavy old canoe go with one paddle. I wish I had the little one that I lost. It won’t do for me to get out too far from land. I must stay in where I can run ashore again if it’s necessary.”

If Brom had been nearer, and if he had known more about sailing vessels, he would not have asserted anything great for the probable speed of either of the clumsy, scow-built concerns which St. Leger was providing for the transportation of his artillery and heavy stores. Inasmuch as they were to carry canvas they were keel-boats, and they were ballasted. They were much broader than the ordinary bateaux, and they were an important evidence of how far the British preparations had advanced. One of the three now out here had two masts and the others had but one. All were schooner-rigged, so far as they had any rigging at all. The fact was that they were at this hour making their first trial trips, to find out whether or not it would be safe to risk anything valuable in them. They had thus far been doing well, and their builder, an old Canadian fisherman, was in high glee over his success.

On each of these naval curiosities there was a sufficient crew and also a few soldiers, for a part of their duty had reference to the several scouting parties which were out and to the necessity for knowing all about the upper or easterly end of the lake. On the two-master had even been mounted a short-nosed three-pounder cannon, but not with any expectation of immediate naval gunnery, for the rebels were not supposed to have war-ships cruising on the lake. It was rather intended as a signal gun, under certain probable circumstances, and the little piece of ordnance

was to do no more just now than to sit still on the deck of the big bateau and look saucy. It was of iron, and therefore it had not been taken from General Burgoyne's celebrated train of brass artillery which was to give him so much trouble between Ticonderoga and Bemis Heights. At the latter place all his interest in his splendid array of six-pounder field-pieces was soon to cease. Of their after-fate he may never have been informed, but at the close of the war, when the Continental army disbanded, the State of New York fell heir to much of the Burgoyne artillery. Shortly afterward it was distributed, piece by piece, among favored towns and villages which had representative citizens in the State Legislature. On all subsequent Fourth of July celebrations the loudest and most patriotic part of the racket made was to come from the brazen lips of the guns which had been brought across the sea to be delivered to the gallant army gathered by Philip Schuyler, Nicholas Herkimer, Benedict Arnold, and a few other energetic Americans—including Brom Roosevelt—to meet them not a great many miles above Albany, on the Hudson.

Brom knew nothing at all about shipping, although he now asserted that he had been at Albany and had seen big sloops in the Hudson River. He was almost as ignorant of cannon, except that he had stared at the dozen or so of various sizes which constituted the armament of Fort

Schuyler, the "key of the Mohawk Valley." Lack of good artillery and of abundant powder to burn in it had been one of the weak points of the American armies from the day when General Israel Putnam mounted wooden Quaker guns upon his ice and snow breastworks on Dorchester Heights to scare the British out of Boston. Brom had no kind of cannon upon his own deckless craft, and he was shortly altogether astounded.

CHAPTER VI

WATER AND WOODS

BROM need not really have been astonished that the fleet or squadron of three flat-bottomed men-of-war out yonder appeared to be sailing after him. There was no sailor to tell him that neither of them could have helped itself just then. That was because that from its peculiar make and rigging no such craft could have sailed any nearer the wind without pretty certainly capsizing. Not one of them could have tacked after him on the wind then blowing, if he had headed his own prow eastward and a point or so south of east. The one thing which had most surprised him, however, had also been a surprise to the officer in command of the schooner-scow, and even more so to all who were on board one of the single-masters. Not long before that an order had been given to the not very experienced gunners in charge of it to load the three-pounder and have it ready to fire a signal for a party on shore. That might possibly have meant precisely such a squad as that from which Brom had so unexpectedly obtained his canoe, and which was now on the gravelly beach

below the crag wondering dolefully what it was best to undertake next. It had somehow entered the mind of one of the cannoneers that a gun like that could not be considered to be truly loaded unless it had a shot in it to keep the powder down. He had therefore duly rammed in his three pounds of cast iron, and when the charge was touched off away sped the ball. As it was mere signal-firing, without any special hope of doing great good to the royal cause in America, no aim had been taken. Nobody had given a thought to the relative positions of the other members of the royal navy on Oneida Lake, and one of them had been logging along in the lee of the two-master, not a hundred yards away, with most of her crew and military passengers lying around gracefully upon her deck. In an instant all these were on their feet, and so were the fellows of all sorts upon the gunboat, for the shot had found a mark for itself, seeing that none had been properly provided. Crash went the boom of that sail, right in the middle, and if it had happened in a real battle with the rebels she would have been but a disabled war-ship. As it was she merely swung around in a helpless, badly wounded manner, while all who witnessed her performance, or that of the cannon-ball, expressed their feelings loudly in such language as was most readily at their command. Perhaps it was a testimony to the wide and miscellaneous character of the

empire ruled by King George that the splintering of that boom was condemned on the spot in English, Dutch, Canada French, German, Irish, Huron, Iroquois, and a curious mixture of all of those tongues. After its great feat of ruining that unlucky spar, the ball made a dive into the water and was drowned.

The firing of that signal-gun was of some use, nevertheless, for all four of the soldiers on the beach took it for a call to them to let off their muskets. Of course they fired in the direction of Brom Roosevelt, but he was safely out of distance, and those bullets also were drowned.

The officer in command of the flotilla was by no means a greenhorn. He did not waste any time upon the broken spar, for he had noted that the canoe with only one man in it was industriously paddling away from him, and he thought he read the meaning of the firing on shore.

“That’s a rebel!” he shouted. “Boats! Sharp, now! We must catch him!”

Other orders followed fast, and no less than three yawl-boats were soon in the water. One of them was to be pulled toward the shore, to find out whether or not the musketeers on the beach could give the countersign which would be required of them before coming within musket-shot. The two other yawls were to follow the strange canoe, and the two-master was to follow in that direction as nearly as her sailing capacity would enable her to do.

Probably it was as well for Brom that both of those boats were hastily manned with about all the load they could carry. Four men each would have been much better, with only one fellow to fight and a race to run before killing him. Besides, a number of minutes had been expended in getting into the water and away, and every second of them had been well employed by the young fugitive. It was greatly to his credit that he did not appear to have lost an ounce of his accustomed coolness, and he was now saying to himself:

“I guess I needn’t be much afraid of any boats. If they do come too near I can land. Those others, though, might follow along shore and I’d be between two fires. Only four of them. If they do catch up with me I’ll fight to the last, for they’d show me no mercy.”

He was therefore now running, it appeared, an almost hopeless race for life, and Colonel Gansevoort at the fort was in danger of losing all the information collected for him at the expense of the lives of three, it might yet be four, of his best and most daring scouts. His canoe was a heavy one, as he had said, but it did run well and his start was very considerable, but he had important things to take account of.

“They have good rowers, of course,” he thought, “and I suppose they can outrun me. It’s of no use to try for the mouth of Oneida Creek. It might be sure death if I got

there and found it full of Tories and Brant's Indians. I wish there wasn't so good a wagon road from there to the fort for the British to use pretty soon. I must try for the northeast corner of the lake, near where we set out from. Perhaps I can get there. If I can paddle three miles while they are rowing four I can make half the distance before I have to give up my canoe. That'll save me just so much of woods and swamps and Indian scouts. They are pulling their best!"

They were indeed pulling hard, but it took less than five minutes to count out one of those yawls. It was a slow coach, and it fell behind so soon that its crew were disposed to give up the race and to leave the taking of that rebel to the really swift craft that was now ahead.

"Hurrah!" shouted Brom, not many minutes later. "My chances are better. That other boat has taken in those chaps from the shore and they won't be following me. That's good, but how this fellow is gaining!"

If he had been nearer he might have been less alarmed on that account, for the speed of his pursuer was costing its oarsmen all the strength there was in them. There is a limit to what men can do in a heavy boat under a hot sun. Breathing spells will surely be called for, and in each pause for breath some of the extra speed will be lost. Even if there is a change of hands, and if fresh men are put at the oars, the boat will lie pretty still while the

change is making. As for Brom, on his side of that exciting race, he was remarking aloud:

"No, it won't do for me to tire myself out. I'd better run ashore."

Just how the race would have turned out under those precise conditions was to become a matter of useless inquiry, for no man ever knows just what is going to happen next. The commander of the gun-scow did not intend to have the same blunder made twice on his ship, and he had been giving his artillerymen careful instructions as to the firing of signals without putting in solid shot, and one of the gunners was an Irishman.

"Captain," he exclaimed, "yer honor, is she oll roight the now?"

"All correct," said the captain. "You'll know better next time."

"Dade an' I wull," responded Pat. "Oi'll just show yiz. Ye pit on the primin'—so! An' then ye tetch her aff, so!"

Bang went the three-pounder, and this time it had no shot in it to hit either the land or the water. What it did do, nevertheless, was to send to the men in the yawls an unmistakable recall signal, which they were altogether willing to obey. It reached them, too, when they were almost within long rifle-range of Brom Roosevelt, and when he was angrily paddling toward the shore, declaring

that it was hard luck to lose his new canoe and all his spoils of war. He might not have escaped at all, but for Pat's signal-gun and the pause in the chase which was caused by that and by a consultation which followed in the yawl. By the time that was over his prow was on the gravel, and he was taking his treasures into the nearest bushes with all celerity.

"We've run him ashore!" shouted the sergeant in command of the yawl. "Now's our chance to rush in and take him!"

"You vas a gomplete vool!" growled one of the men, a Tory from the German Flats. "Dot fellow vill fetch von tead man, efery shot he can vire, so soon as ve are in ranshe vrom his bushes. He is von of Peter Gansevoort's scouts. He shoot you virst, vis your cocked hat. Stone tead!"

It was a very clear and forcible way of putting the argument, and there was not a man in the boat who favored the idea of rowing up within rifle-range of a Yankee sharpshooter who would be deliberately selecting the man whom he would kill first. He could hardly be expected to fail of hitting somebody in so crowded a boat as that.

"Men," exclaimed the sergeant, "it is our duty to obey the signal. We have no orders to follow him on shore. Besides, I am responsible for the lives of my crew. We will pull back to the schooner."

That was what some of them were calling the two-master, and there were those who spoke of the others as sloops. On the former there was already a conversation going on between the captain and his new arrivals, and he had expressed his surprise at the presence of American scouts, on land or water. It might mean a great deal, and it was his duty to report at once to St. Leger. For that reason, if for no other, he was disposed to pardon Pat for the signal-gun and to be pleased with the speedy return of his boats. He even said to the sergeant on his arrival:

“ You idiot! Hans was right. You might have pulled into an ambush and lost every man inside of a minute. Riflemen in bushes! Dead shots!”

Brom had heard the Irish gun without at first understanding that it was of any special importance to himself. Then he slowly began to gather that in some way it was connected with the advantageous pause of his enemies in the yawl. He lay down in the bushes quite calmly after that and watched them through his spyglass until they turned and began to pull away.

“ I guess I’d better let them get well out of sight,” he was thinking. “ Then, as long as the lake is clear of their kind of chaps, I’ll paddle right along. June’s got here, and it’s a long day. I can make a good distance before dark. That was a pretty narrow escape, and my

troubles aren't over yet. Some of the worst are ahead of me."

He was glad to take a good rest after his hard boat-race, and it was an hour before he felt like setting out on another cruise. When at last he went down to his canoe and prepared for it he was pondering.

"One thing is as clear as day," he thought. "The British are getting ready to come pretty soon. They have taken entire possession of the lake and of both shores. The redskins will keep the woods for them all the while. That's so, and so they must be really masters of the old wagon-road and of Oneida Creek itself. They can march all the way to the fort before we can do one thing to stop them. I must not let myself get killed if it takes me a whole week to crawl in with my report."

He was about to push off, but before he did so he went to examine a dingy-looking canvas bag which had lain almost unnoticed in the stern of the canoe, mainly because he had had so many other things to attend to. It had not seemed to promise much, but it did bring him something. The soldiers of King George had complained of being short of provisions, so that it was necessary for them to have a deer-hunt, and the bag suggested that they had been correct. Nevertheless, some fragments of cold boiled beef and corn-bread, which would have been short rations for four men, were a fairly good supply for one boy, however

hungry he might be, and he was glad to find that he was in no immediate need of deer-stalking.

“About the most dangerous thing for me to do,” he asserted, “would be to fire a gun between this and Fort Schuyler.”

Out he paddled, and he did not put in any very hard work as he drifted on over the now almost calm water of the lake. He did not know, and he would not have cared, that this very calm was vexing the soul of the British officer in command of the keel-boat squadron. The schooner itself was making but slow progress with its pair of sails up, and as for the others the splintered boom was now of small consequence. It was found advisable to get out long sweep-oars, if the news on hand was to reach the other end of the lake that night, as perhaps it ought.

Very beautiful were the placid water and the wooded hills in the bright sunshine, and Brom could feel it, although he hardly knew what it was that he was feeling. He was thinking, too, and once he made a long pause in his rowing to gaze around and mutter:

“I can’t exactly believe it, but I heard Uncle Herkimer and General Schuyler talking about it. That was when he was at our house to see what could be done for General Washington’s army. They wanted things to eat more than they wanted men, but Washington needed them, too. My father and the boys were Continentals already,

and two of my cousins went then, but Abe Herkimer and his brother George decided not to go at once. General Schuyler himself said that they might be more needed right there along the Mohawk. But what things they did say about what this country is going to be after this war is ended! Both of them said it. They said we had a country worth fighting for. Before many years they believed that all the Indians would be driven out or dead, and all the province of New York would be as thickly settled as it is now around Albany and Schenectady. There would be big ships in the Hudson and there would be good wagon-roads everywhere. Uncle Herkimer said that he meant to set up sawmills and grist-mills at a dozen places where he could get water-power, but that what we needed just as much was woolen-mills. That is, if the wolves and bears and dogs could be kept from killing off all the sheep any man might try to raise. General Schuyler said there would have to be a heavy bounty on wolf scalps, but the Indians wouldn't be taking any more scalps of the other kind. Uncle Herkimer told him he knew some men who would get rich on a good wolf-scalp bounty. Well, maybe I shall live to see a good deal of this forest cleared away, if I don't get my own scalp taken off before I can get to the fort."

His lazy, dreamy half-hour came to an end and he again took up his paddle. He did not hurry even then,

but he kept a sharp lookout up and down the lake, and every now and then he found himself wondering how affairs were going on at Fort Schuyler. Time passed slowly, but for all Brom's deliberation miles and miles of water had been put behind him. It was about sunset and that part of the lake seemed entirely deserted. There had been no appearance of anything different upon the shore, except that he had seen a gang of deer come down to drink, and now he noted a light-blue column of smoke above the trees on the hills.

"That must mean a camp of some of them," he remarked. "Most likely it's a pretty strong party or they'd never have ventured to light a fire. I don't mind that. I'm glad to know just where they are. It's time for me to go ashore. If I should be fool enough to go for the mouth of Oneida Creek wouldn't I be caught? Like a rat in a trap!"

He shortly ran into a little cove where he could conceal his canoe fairly well among reeds and bushes. As soon as that was done he took out all his possessions, and then his next attention was paid to the beef and bread. He was still in no hurry for several reasons, and one of these was a doubt as to the line of march it was best for him to take upon setting out homeward. Not far from the cove, however, the land rose in a gentle hill, and Brom took with him only his rifle and his spyglass when he went

to the top of it. Even then it was necessary for him to climb to an upper branch of a hickory-tree before he could bring his glass to bear upon matters and things at the head of the lake. He carefully squared himself in the tree-fork and put the glass to his eye.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "It's a good thing for me that I didn't try to paddle any farther. There must be more than thirty canoes. They are just coming out of the creek. Jam full of warriors. Why, all those canoes belong to the Oneidas and the scows are ours! That settles the matter. That band of Oneidas is on its way to join St. Leger and Sir John Johnson. All of them professing to be friendly to us, too. I guess Colonel Gansevoort will be glad to know this. Some from the other tribes may be with them, perhaps. There weren't so many Oneidas around here."

He was not making any mistake in that calculation, for only a few of the red men in the canoes were of the professedly friendly clan. All the rest were Cayugas, to whom their half-peaceful cousins had kindly lent the necessary flotilla to take them to the foot of the lake. That, of course, was a thing which might be done without breaking Indian faith with General Schuyler and the settlers. Brom watched them critically until he was able to say that this meant a reenforcement of much more than a hundred men to the British commander, and then he came down

out of his tree. He appeared to be mentally relieved, too, for he said:

"I guess they all came down from the western bank of the creek. If any of them stayed in the woods they'd be over yonder. I may find things clear over this way, except for the party that made that smoke. I won't run against them. I'll crawl along till it's too dark to crawl farther."

Back he went to the place where he had left his canoe, and here he had a lesson to learn concerning the distance at which some Indians can show how little need they ordinarily have of a spyglass. He made up his pack, and found that with the musket, axes, hatchet, his own rifle, and his rations he would be heavily loaded for so long a march. He was all ready to set out, and he turned for one more long look upon the lake. It was not so very long a look, after all, for a boat with several braves in it was paddling swiftly toward the shore. They were not aiming precisely at the spot where he had landed. No Indian would have done that, but the course they were taking would bring them on land a few hundred yards below or westerly. Beyond a doubt he had been seen, and so his enemies knew that they had only one man to deal with.

"This is bad!" he exclaimed, as they swept around a bend in the shore. "Anyhow, I mustn't leave any trail

behind me. I'll go along the gravel. My moccasins won't make any mark on the stones of the beach. Quick, now!"

With all his load upon his shoulders Brom made rapid work along the shore, and his enemies were not traveling quite so fast, as they stealthily scouted along from the opposite direction. They were all the while keeping prudently under cover from a possible Yankee rifleman, so that he was going three feet to their one. It was well for him to do so, and he kept it up vigorously, even after he had gained a considerable distance. In the meantime the red men, braves of the Cayugas, reached the deserted canoe and promptly decided that it had once belonged to their neighbors, the Onondagas, without troubling themselves to imagine how on earth it had found its winding way into Oneida Lake. Each tribe had its own way for finishing a canoe and each warrior had his own private mark, so that disputes relating to property might be the more easily settled; but this particular boat was now a Cayuga, to all immediate intents and purposes. Not a great deal of time was wasted over the captured birch-bark, and all that while two of the warriors were searching the ground near by for the trail of the man for whom they were proposing to hunt. Perhaps they exhibited less than their usual cunning in failing to note at first that the plain trail made by Brom when he went to his hickory-tree outlook was balanced by the footprints of his hasty return.

At all events, four of them started at once upon that apparently sure path, while one lingered under cover near the boat. This was altogether a fine arrangement for Brom's especial benefit. While they were scouting their futile way to the foot of the tree and back again, he was steadily plodding on. He followed the gravel road of the beach for half a mile, and then he waded up a small run of water for a hundred yards before striking out into the open forest. After all that care his trail might have been found by such crafty and keen-eyed pursuers if it had been earlier in the day or if in their minds had not also been the necessity they were under of rejoining their fleet of boats and pushing on down the lake. As it was, they were before long willing to abandon the search and to be satisfied with one stolen canoe and with having no fresh scalp to glory over.

"I can't guess how many miles it'll be," muttered Brom, "zigzagging this way and that way. I must snake it through the hills easterly. I've left those fellows, anyhow."

CHAPTER VII

THE ONEIDA SPY

WHEN Brom Roosevelt lay in his canoe that afternoon lazily dreaming of all sorts of things and wishing so sincerely for a good look at the fort, several things were going on there in which he would have been interested. Perhaps he might have noticed in the first place that two hundred men, working diligently, can set a large number of stockade timbers and throw up considerable earth embankment in three days. The entire front toward the forest had a better appearance and the tree trunks and other rubbish had been burned up completely. There was no longer any kind of cover between the woods and the fort. Within the wide enclosure there seemed to be no important change. The children were playing here and there, and the women were going to and fro as usual and as if no kind of danger were threatening them. The sentinels were pacing up and down, and not by any means the least watchful of them all was a large mastiff dog who had posted himself, lying down, in the middle of the open road-gate. A question might have arisen as to how any approaching party would be able to give that fellow the countersign. Not

many paces from him just now, however, were three persons, two of whom he must have admitted, for they were newcomers. One of them was remarking:

"Colonel Gansevoort, I must say that you have done a great deal. The fort looks every way more defensible than I had been afraid it would. I wish you could tell me more about what is coming against it."

The speaker was a stout, broad-shouldered man of thirty years or more, not in uniform, but unusually well dressed for that time and place. He had a soldierly look, nevertheless, and the sword at his side was a good cut and thrust instead of the ordinary "dress sword." It was a weapon which was likely to do good service in so strong a hand as his appeared to be. Slow and deliberate indeed was the response of the colonel.

"Captain Herkimer," he said, "I am glad to hear you speak well of what has been done. As to the rest, I may possibly know more when some of our scouts come in. But what do you think of the opinions of the chief? According to Ough-na-ga-ra nearly half of the Oneida tribe is almost ready to take up the hatchet with Tha-yen-da-negea. If he is correct, that means bloodshed along the whole frontier."

As he spoke both of them had turned toward the person who was walking at the other side of the colonel. He also was well dressed, for no self-respecting chief was likely

to pay a visit to a post commander without putting on all the finery he had with him. Truth to tell, his ornamentation had not omitted the boastful scalp-locks on his leggings, and not all of these told for themselves that they had been taken from the heads of hostile red men. None of the tribes at any time at war with the Iroquois had been distinguished by short red hair or by long brown locks.

"Ugh!" he grunted. "Herkimer go tell his father."

"Well," said the captain, "it looks badly, but it isn't altogether news to me. It is just what General Schuyler and my father have been trying to make the people expect and prepare for all along. If they can be made to understand their danger, they may be induced to leave their corn-fields and take down their rifles before the whole valley is swept by fire and the knife and the tomahawk."

"That is not all that I am thinking of," responded the colonel. "They can safely get in their wheat so far as Burgoyne is concerned. There is a long march before him and his redcoats. The most important point is, what are we to do right here? I have sent spies to Oswego and up Lake Ontario as far as the St. Lawrence. It is time that some of them were here to tell us what is going on—if any of them are yet alive."

The Indian chief spoke good Dutch, and his next remark did not contain a great deal of comfort for his white friends.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed, as he swung his long arm around him, pointing at the defenses. "Great many sticks, long heap dirt, many log houses. All no good. Tha-yenda-ne-gea, Sir John Johnson, St. Leger, Tories, Canadians, big guns, come knock away sticks, knock away dirt. Gansevoort want more rifle, more men, more big gun. Fort no good!"

"Captain Herkimer," sadly replied the colonel, "the chief is right. If the enemy were to come now I have really no fort to hold and no men to hold it with, not if I were to build it ever so well. There are not half cannon enough, and I am short of ammunition for even these."

"Father and General Schuyler said that you are to have both and that you are to be reenforced," began the captain, but a quick side-glance from the colonel silenced him, and he did not at once let out any further information as to the plans of the American commanders. It might be possible that even a professedly friendly Iroquois chief was not an entirely trustworthy counselor concerning future military operations. This much he might be permitted to know, for it was no secret whatever and no harm would follow if it were told to the British. The talk went on, therefore, under certain invisible restrictions, and it might have appeared to an outside critic that Ough-na-ga-ra must have been somewhere or other or in some remarkable manner have become strangely well informed concerning

the numbers and condition of the British forces. Perhaps he had been paying a flying visit to the Canadas or to the camps of General Burgoyne. Quite a large number of Indian chiefs were understood to have done so, and to have won thereby many presents on account of their loyalty to the British Crown. Before long, however, he appeared to be weary of so much conversation, and went wandering around the unfinished fortifications by himself, making caustic remarks to the workmen, here and there, as to the unimportance of so many big sticks and so much heaped-up dirt.

As soon as the two white men were by themselves, Colonel Gansevoort turned angrily to Captain Herkimer and exclaimed:

“Do you suppose that I trust him? No; I am not a fool. He has been a pretty good spy for us, but he is here now more as a spy for Sir John, and it will not do for me to tell him so. Let him see all he can and go and report it. If he did not some other Indian friend or some treacherous Tory would be sure to do so. We can hardly trust anybody.”

“That’s so,” said Herkimer; “but I wish I knew what had become of your scouts and spies on Lake Ontario and in the woods.”

So did the anxious fort commander, but all of that night and most of the following day went by without any-

thing coming to relieve him of his many uncertainties. All the routine affairs of the fort went on as usual, without a solitary incident to disturb their dull monotony. Captain Herkimer and Colonel Gansevoort and other officers held interesting conversations, and all of the budget of general news brought by the captain was duly distributed among the soldiers of the garrison. As for the dark-faced Oneida chief, all the talk in him appeared to be completed, but his curiosity concerning the fortifications and their growing improvements continued. From some of the few remarks which he condescended to make it appeared that the fortifications of the white men were by no means new things to him. He told of the manner in which General Schuyler was fortifying his camp at Stillwater, and he compared that and this frontier "key" with what he had seen in days gone by at Ticonderoga, Montreal, Quebec, and Plattsburg. He seemed to have a tremendous opinion of the extensive works at "Ti," but he was not enough of a general to make the criticisms which both British and American commanders had made upon that costly but now all but useless bit of war architecture. He was listened to and he was watched, and Captain Herkimer was entirely correct in asserting:

"What I have to say is that whether or not Ough-na-ga-ra is playing spy for the British, he knows every gun we have and all about this fort."

It was late in the afternoon, and they two were walking together on the open beyond the stockade toward the forest.

"Much good that will do him or them," began the colonel, but in an instant his whole manner underwent a change. "Herkimer!" he shouted, in a voice that was hoarse with sudden excitement. "Look yonder! The enemy! Do you hear that? Go in and call out every man of the garrison! I must find out what this means."

He was pointing in the direction of the nearest forest, and his first exclamation had been called for by the crack of a rifle among them. It had been followed by a dozen rattling reports, and there was little need for Herkimer to run in and shout orders, for the entire force of Fort Schuyler was rushing to arms. Some of them indeed were dashing out and forward too hastily, for the fear of a surprise was on them.

"Halt!" shouted Colonel Gansevoort. "Close the gates! Not another man must follow without orders. Forward!"

That last command was uttered to about thirty men who were forming behind him, and he led them rapidly toward the sound of the firing. Several more shots were heard as they went on, and then all was quiet.

"Every man to his tree!" called out the colonel, as they entered the woods. "Keep under cover! I had sta-

tioned five men just beyond this. We shall know all about it in a minute or so. Steady, now!"

There need not have been any great alarm to the garrison or to its prompt and energetic commander. In a few minutes more an explanation of the whole affair was being given to the colonel himself by a tired-looking boy who had no wounds to show, but who had a great deal to tell.

"Hurrah!" the colonel had yelled when he saw him coming. "Brom Roosevelt, if I'm not glad to see you! Where are the others?"

Brom did not answer that last question, but hurriedly responded:

"Colonel Gansevoort, don't send the men any farther in. I didn't see a red skin all day, till I was almost here. Then they'd have got me if it hadn't been for our patrol. They ought to be called back. There may be a strong war party out yonder. I want to make my report to you alone, sir. I'm the only man left alive to make it. The others are dead and scalped."

"Great God!" exclaimed the colonel. "I was afraid it might be so. Come right on in with me. Abe Herkimer is here, and I want him to hear all that you have to tell. He is from General Schuyler."

He was almost pale with eagerness to get that report, but he did not fail in giving the necessary orders to support the patrol and enable them to fall back in something

like safety. None of them were hurt, and they reported as soon as they reached the fort:

“There isn’t any certainty that we struck an Indian, but that there Brom Roosevelt brought down one. Then we drove ’em beyond the cover where he was hiding, and he dodged his way in like an old scouter. He was awfully loaded up, too, and he wouldn’t drop a thing of his plunder.”

That was so, and Brom’s determination to keep his spoils of war had been a good thing for him. It had compelled him to go forward slowly, cautiously, with frequent rests, and he had been taking one of these breathing spells when at last he had been discovered by his enemies. He was safe now, spoils and all, and he was in a room at the colonel’s headquarters with him and Captain Herkimer.

“Begin at the beginning, Brom,” said the colonel.

Brom did so, and very grave grew the faces of the two officers as he unfolded to them inch by inch the advanced state of the British preparations for the capture of the fort and the completeness with which they had taken possession of Oneida Lake.

“Can you give me any clear idea,” asked the colonel, “as to how many men they could bring against us just now?”

“Kraus could not tell,” said Brom, “whether or not St. Leger himself has reached Oswego. About four hun-

dred British regulars are there and no more are expected right away. Some of Sir John's Tories are there—Royal Greens—I don't know how many. More of them and Butler's Tories, about seven hundred in all, are at the St. Lawrence, ready to come. There will be hundreds of Canadians and near seven hundred Indians. Brant has been down among all the Six Nations to the Susquehanna, but he may have got back to Oswego by this time. Kraus heard them say that it would take them weeks to bring their cannon over from Lake Ontario and boat them up to this end of Oneida, but the cannon scows are almost ready. He said they mean to make a sweep on this fort before it's finished."

"That is just what they would like to do," said the colonel. "How sorry I am about those three men! It's almost a miracle that you escaped. Captain Herkimer, one thing is plain. You must take Brom with you to make this report to General Schuyler."

"My father would like to see him, too," replied the captain. "It will be better than if he put it in writing, for they can question him."

"I could write it out," said Brom, proudly, for good penmanship was an accomplishment which not by any means all of the frontier boys possessed in those days before the common schools and academies were in existence.

"You will not need to," said the colonel; "and now I want to caution you about one thing more. You must know Ough-na-ga-ra?"

"Of course I do," said Brom. "I've seen him at General Herkimer's a dozen times. I saw him outside as we came along in. He's a rascal."

"Not so much as some of the rest of them," half laughed the colonel. "Well, he will surely be after you for a talk. Tell him everything he wants. His knowing it won't hurt us, and I want him to suppose that we trust him entirely. He has really brought me a great many things that I needed to know. He has a perfect itch for carrying news."

Brom thought he understood the Oneida, and now the commendations he received from the two officers would have made him feel proud indeed if he had not been so dreadfully tired and hungry. His troubles were not over yet, however, for when he went out from the headquarters it was only to fall into the hands of other officers and of news-hungry soldiers. Every man of them already knew part of his adventures and wanted to know more, and a strong impression was growing among them that the Indians were already all around the fort. In that they were not altogether wrong, and one who was now inside of it came, as had been expected, for his share of the talk with the returned scout.

Ough-na-ga-ra's first inquiry related to Brom's rifle, and he inspected it with solemn care, paying special attention to its bore.

"Ugh!" he said; "Ough-na-ga-ra know now. Boy kill Seneca. Soldier no hit him. Seneca keep scalp. Bad brave. Know him long time."

From further remarks that he made it appeared that he had actually visited the scene of the little skirmish and knew all about it. He also freely admitted that he had known beforehand some of the things which Brom told him now concerning boats and other matters on Oneida Lake. He had military opinions of his own, moreover, for he remarked, contemptuously:

"Ugh! fort safe now. British and Sir John never move quick. Tha-yen-da-ne-gea not there to send them out. Lose fort when Brant come."

He was evidently possessed by the idea, not at all uncommon upon both sides of the great fight for the province of New York, that decidedly the ablest commander on the part of King George and his ministers was the war-chief of the Iroquois. As for the slowness and unreadiness of Sir John and of other British leaders, more than one sharply illustrative anecdote was in circulation, and the Oneida had seen some things himself.

Brom at last finished his talk and his supper, and was shown the way to a comfortable bunk wherein he might

lie down and go to sleep without any fear of being toma-hawked before morning.

Colonel Gansevoort and Captain Herkimer and other American officers held a long conference at the fort that evening without being at all aware of another council which was taking place at the foot of Oneida Lake at the same hour. The latter consisted of St. Leger and other British officers, Sir John Johnson, his brother-in-law, Colonel Claus, Butler, the celebrated Tory, and several Indian chiefs. One of these was a head chief of the Cayugas who had come down the lake with the Oneida canoes and the fleet of other boats. Among the officers was the captain who had commanded the sail keel-boats on their trial trip, and he was disposed to think well of them, but he said, with a serious look on his face:

“I’m not much of a sailor, but in my opinion those things will do best on smooth water. Sometimes there are rough storms on this lake. I think I wouldn’t send out the artillery in those boats in bad weather, unless I were willing to risk sending all the guns to the bottom.”

“I will look out for that,” responded St. Leger; “but, oh, how I wish we were ready to strike now! If we had boats enough to-day, and if all our cannon had arrived, I’d be off up the lake to-morrow morning, and we would have Fort Schuyler before they could build any more earth-

works. It is this delay in transportation that is killing us. Every day counts."

From many other things which were said it was evident that they had all the information that they needed, and that they were under the impression that what they were doing and preparing to do was as yet a secret well kept from the Americans. They might have been almost correct in that idea if Brom Roosevelt had not succeeded in escaping the perils which had beset him. Perhaps it was a curious war incident worth noting that the next important movements in the Burgoyne campaign, as it is sometimes called, were to result from the adventures of an American boy in a birch-bark canoe.

CHAPTER VIII

A SCATTERED ARMY

WHEN Brom came out to get his breakfast the next morning he found an order awaiting him to come to headquarters as soon as he had eaten it. The post quartermaster also met him to tell him that by the order of Colonel Gansevoort the spyglass was to be given him as his own personal property, as a reward for good conduct, but that the musket and the other things belonged to the army. The laws of war do not give to private soldiers the arms and equipments which a beaten enemy may leave behind upon a field of battle. Neither do they have to pay for their own weapons and things in case the fortune of war has turned against them.

Brom's talk with Colonel Gansevoort that morning was not a long one. All necessary instructions were in the head of Captain Herkimer. A pair of unusually good-looking Canada ponies had been tethered near the road-gate. One of them already carried behind the saddle the neat valise of the captain, and the other was soon ornamented in like manner with the not nearly so elegant leather bag

which contained the small property of Brom Roosevelt. He was not expected to do any fighting on the way, but both of the riders were to carry their rifles, and there were pistol-holsters in front of Herkimer's saddle as well as a valise behind it.

Early in the forenoon all preparations had been made and the despatches for General Schuyler were on their way. The colonel's farewell was:

"Tell General Schuyler that we can hold the fort against all that is likely to come within two weeks. We may all be scalped inside of that time, but I think not. Before the end of July, however, there will be two thousand men around this fort, and if they take it they won't leave one living man, for we shall defend it to the last. I will not trust any of my command as prisoners in the hands of Brant and his warriors."

"You won't have to surrender," replied Herkimer, cheerfully. "Your reenforcements will be on hand in time, plenty of them."

There were good reasons why that assertion should be shouted out as it was, so that the rank and file of the garrison might hear it. They were all brave men or they would not have been there, but there had been many things to dispirit them, and there were doleful suggestions passing around among them. Moreover, there are always evil talkers, and some of these had asserted that this mere

squad of two hundred men was to be left to take care of itself, while all the rest of the forces which were being raised were gathered at Stillwater to meet Burgoyne. Just now the fate of Kraus and Dutcher and Martens had been taken as a terrible warning, if one were needed, as to what kind of mercy might be expected from their red and white assailants. These were surely drawing nearer, and now a small skirmish had been fought very near the fort. It was therefore well that all should hear that the reenforcements were on their way, or at least that they were sure to arrive. At the same time there was no harm in giving the same information to the gaily rigged Oneida chief, who smiled in so friendly a manner while he listened, and who disappeared in so entirely Indian a fashion within an hour after those two ponies cantered out at the gate and down the well-traveled river road. If, however, any man like Colonel Gansevoort could have read the thought which was lurking just behind that quiet, copper-colored smile, he might have obtained the distinguished Oneida warrior's real opinion somewhat after this form:

“Herkimer good; Brom good; both heap brave; ride pony fast; never see Little Falls; never have talk with Schuyler. Think Cayugas take two scalp before sun-down. Ough-na-ga-ra go see Sir John; see St. Leger. Ugh!”

Whatever might be the reasons why a sincerely “friend-

ly" Indian should go from an American fort to pay an equally friendly visit to the British army or any of its officers, especially the commander of the New York Tories, the fact that he did so may offer an explanation of some of the difficulties which surrounded General Burgoyne as well as General Schuyler. The fact was that the Iroquois and the other Indian tribes were not Englishmen, owing allegiance to King George, nor were they American patriots, with duties to the Continental Congress. They considered themselves entirely independent of either of these foreign powers whose dishonest white subjects were coming in to cut down their forests and destroy their hunting-grounds. At the same time they were willing to receive presents and pay, and to have as many great talks as might be made profitable, while they hardly disguised their assent to the possible scalping of both King and Congress and the driving of the settlers of all sorts out of the country. They could practise any amount of exceedingly skilful diplomacy as occasions demanded with perfectly clear Indian consciences, and they did so.

Much work had been expended on that river road for military purposes, and at that season of the year it was a good one. It was fairly level, following the river's winding way, and this made it longer as well as easier. Captain Herkimer and Brom rode forward briskly at first, but the former shortly pulled in and began to cast rapid glances

about him and ahead of him. They may have been something more than a mile from the fort when he halted and quietly remarked to his companion:

"Brom, my boy, I'm glad I know every inch of this road. Right over beyond that next rise of ground is the most likely place for them to make their ambush. The Oneida thinks they will not try it any farther down the valley. He may be right, but I think they would try it on anywhere. He kindly told me that I would be sure to give away my scalp, if I did not take good care to keep it on my head. Cayugas, he said, and Senecas."

"What are we to do?" asked Brom. "We can't cross the river."

"Yes, we could," said Herkimer. "I know where there is good crossing, if we could get to it and if we knew what we would be riding over into. Our best course is to turn off into the woods at the left right here, and push on into the old Indian trail that leads on among the small lakes and to the mountains. We can follow that as far as we think best, and then we can come back into the main road."

There was no fence to prevent them from quickly disappearing among the trees of a dense forest, but in doing so they were inflicting a grievous disappointment upon a small party of summer tourists who were shading themselves from the hot sun among the bushes near the roadside.

not more than a quarter of a mile farther on. It was not upon high ground, but the idea of it had been given to Herkimer by the Oneida chief in the friendliest manner. A capital place had been chosen at a bend of the river, where a rider coming down the road could not have seen what was in it thirty yards beyond him. There were two or three white men also among those eager expectants, and not one of them told how he came to be there with a knowledge of the fact that one of General Schuyler's couriers, a son of that much-hated patriot, General Herkimer, was shortly to ride within range of them. Perhaps, however, they were giving a certain friendly Oneida chief much thanks for such valuable information without also giving him due credit for the additional service he had rendered them in advising their intended victim as to about where he might expect to meet them. Possibly there are wheels within wheels in the subtle brain of a red diplomat who is desirous of being upon good terms with all red men and at the same time with such white ones as are likely, on occasions yet to come, to have power over the distribution of presents. At all events, there they lay and waited as patiently as they could, while away off to the northward, in the woods, Brom Roosevelt and Abraham Herkimer were meanly sneaking along the old trail. This was not by any means a wagon-road, but it answered very well for a bridle-path.

"Brom," said Herkimer, at last, "if the Oneida was anywhere near telling the truth we may be two miles away from them. There's one more thing to be thought of, though. If he was treacherous and only meant to send us off into the woods to be shot and scalped where we would never be heard of, the most likely spot for that, in my opinion, would be at the place where this trail crosses the swamp. That swamp goes all the way to the river, and our folks had to build a corduroy for it there. I think we had better go for the road again and try the corduroy. Both places are bad enough, with plenty of cover."

"Why not try the trail through the swamp first, if we can," began Brom, but at that instant they heard rifle reports and the buzz of bullets over their heads.

"Brom," exclaimed Herkimer, "are you hit?"

"No," said Brom "they fired too high. It's just as you said. They are right yonder, in the edge of the swamp. They thought it was safest to watch for us at both places."

"Young braves here," said the captain. "Fired too soon. Quick, now! Fall off your horse and lie as if you were dead. They didn't hit me."

Down went the two messengers, after skilful reels in their saddles, and away trotted their ponies among the trees, while fierce whoops of exultation arose among the reeds and bushes. Immediately after the whooping a pair

of half-naked forms sprang out, knives and tomahawks in hand. There had been no prudent pause for the reloading of emptied rifles. Were there not two fallen white warriors waiting to be scalped, and had not this swamp ambuscade turned out a complete success, while the other, over on the road, had proved a failure? Nevertheless, dead white men who slide from ponies and come down with some care among high, soft grass may still be able to roll over in it and use it for a cover while they level and cock their rifles and loosen their knives in their belts.

"Brom, here they come! Get a good bead. Now, let 'em have it!"

There was hardly more than a second between the two shots, and neither of the marksmen missed his aim, but Herkimer exclaimed:

"Don't get up, Brom. Lie still and load. I heard a third whoop when they were yelling. As soon as we are loaded we can creep after the ponies. Nobody in that swamp will follow us out of cover."

They heard more than one fierce, disappointed war-whoop while they were charging their pieces, but it was as Herkimer had said, for the whoopers remained in their coverts. The creeping was slow and cautious work until trees could be reached. After that it was easy to catch and mount the ponies, and the immediate peril appeared to be over.

"What do you think now?" asked Brom. "Will they trap us again on the river road at the swamp crossing?"

"No, they won't," said the captain. "They felt sure of catching us at one of these places. We have only a mile or so to go before we are almost out of their reach. The Oneida's warning was good. I'll remember him. For some reason or other he didn't wish to have us killed."

That may have been so, but it was possible, nevertheless, that there might still be watchful Cayugas or Senecas between them and the river, and they went forward ready for the sight of a feather or the flash of a rifle. There were long breaths drawn at the reaching of the road, it did look like such a splendid place for an ambuscade, but none was there. Nothing like a sense of safety could come to them until they had actually passed all the way over the half-mile of log highway which had been put there by the settlers away back in the days of the old French war.

"Thank God, that's the last of it!" exclaimed Herkimer, as he pulled in and looked back on that unpleasant expanse of thickets and water. "We can ride right along now. Their trap cost them something, too."

"Shall we push on all night?" asked Brom.

"Not too fast," replied the captain; "but our next sleep will be at my father's house. You will have a chance to see your mother to-morrow. Then we will go ahead, but we've an important business to do as we go."

"What's that?" asked Brom. "We must get to General Schuyler——"

"We won't waste any time," interrupted Herkimer; "but I know what his orders would be to me. I must notify every man I meet and every house on the way that St. Leger and the Indians are coming. There isn't anything else more important than that. It's a great errand! I know what I'm talking about. Father and General Schuyler did not think General Burgoyne was sending so strong a force this way. It is a sharp game, if it should be made to succeed. It is just this way. If poor Kraus was correct in his figures, St. Leger will have at least eighteen hundred men to begin with; perhaps more. If he can take the fort all the Tories on the frontier that are now lying still will join him. At least fifteen hundred more. The Indians that are hesitating will come to a victorious war-path by the hundred, and then St. Leger could march down the Mohawk with over three thousand men, may be four thousand. That would compel General Schuyler to face two armies instead of one, and he would be knocked all to pieces."

"We must save the fort!" shouted Brom, but he did not even then have any clear idea of how much had been done to defeat the deep plans of the British army authorities by a squad of four American scouts, or spies, of whom only one had escaped the scalping-knife. The three others

had paid with their lives for the news which the fourth and Abraham Herkimer were now to distribute among the farmers and carry to the generals. General Washington himself and the Continental Congress were to know more, whatever they might or might not be able to do to prevent so great a disaster.

The two riders did not now have to go far before they met wayfarers and came to farms. Brom and Captain Herkimer did their whole duty as news-agents, and the halts and talks not only procured abundant refreshments and rests for them, but for their ponies also. Nevertheless, there was no incident whatever that Brom considered of any importance to him until late in the following forenoon, when he awoke from a good bit of sleep to find himself in a bed in a room of the great Herkimer mansion. He had always admired that house, and he was particularly well pleased to be in it that morning. There was not an Indian enemy nor a white one for many a long mile, and he had no need to look around for his rifle, as he actually did, with no one to use it on. He knew that the house was made of stone, and he had heard it said that it would last for centuries. There was no one to tell him, however, that not a great many years after that a man named Clinton would plan a great ditch all the way across New York. It would be called the Erie Canal, and the course laid out for it by its engineers would cause it to knock at the front

door of the Herkimer house. In due time heavily laden boats would be running down there under the very spot Brom stood on when he got out of bed.

No boats were running on the Erie Canal that morning, but old Polly Winton had been running, gleefully, upon a neighborly errand of her own, and she had told everybody she met on her way to the Roosevelt place. She had not yet returned, but Brom hardly had time to half dress himself before the door of his room flew open, and he heard a cry that was almost a shriek of joy, and a pair of arms went eagerly around him.

“Brom! Brom! are you really back again? Are you safe? O Brom!”

“Mother!” shouted Brom. “And I’ve had such a time of it! I’ve ever so much to tell you. But I did my duty, as you told me.”

“Yes,” she said; “and I met Abe Herkimer, and he said you had been so brave and all that, but I don’t care. O Brom, I’m so glad you escaped! Poor Mrs. Kraus, too! I know her. She’ll be feeling dreadfully. Oh, how I wish this awful war was over! Come down and get your breakfast.”

He was entirely ready for that, but after they were both down in the dining-room it was not so easy for him to do anything with his mouth except answer her questions and those of half a dozen more excited persons. The captain was

not there, for he had gone over to Fort Dayton on military business, leaving word for Brom to be ready for an early setting out on the road. Brom was glad to hear that, for he had a dim idea that he might be compelled to talk himself to death if he did not get away from his mother's neighbors. Among these, indeed, before long came good Mrs. Schuyler, and almost her first words were:

"O Brom, we haven't heard one thing from Hon Yost except that a man met him on the river road, almost to Albany! He was singing, too, and he told the man he was a friend of George Washington."

"Well, Aunt Schuyler," said Brom, "Hon Yost knows quite enough not to get himself into any difficulties with the army. He will hurrah for our side unless he is among the other kind of people. Sometimes I think he knows a great deal more than we give him credit for."

Noon came and went, and shortly afterward Mrs. Roosevelt was compelled to bid good-by to her son again. She would have preferred to keep him at home for a while, but she was easier in her mind at having him ride toward the Hudson instead of toward that Indian-haunted Oneida Lake.

"Brom," said Captain Herkimer, as they rode away, "things here are not so bad. More than two hundred good

men have already gathered at Fort Dayton, and more are coming in. There are men enough in this valley to beat Burgoyne if they can only be made to take down their guns."

CHAPTER IX

THE TWO GENERALS

THE hay-crop promised an abundance that year, and the scythes had been ringing merrily in many a field. The wheat looked well. The corn was high enough to show the green beauty of its serried ranks. There were orchards and vines, there were flocks and herds, there were many of the things which make life pleasant around the rude homesteads of the New York farmers. There were wives and children in the homes. It was hardly to be wondered at that the farmers held back and were slow to exchange their harvest-fields and firesides for the discomforts of the ill-provided camp of the American army. They were also called upon to take into calculation inevitable pecuniary losses, adding to these the strong probabilities of wounds, captivities, or death, the terrors and chances of the battles which were now sure to come with what was said to be the best army which had ever been sent over from England to America. Therefore the recruits required for General Schuyler's thin regiments had been coming in but slowly, and he had at his disposal hardly

more than a third, even at this late day, of the numbers which General Burgoyne was said to be bringing against him. His position was rendered more harassing, as was that of General Washington himself, by the intrigues and jealousies and paltry ambitions which were at work in Congress and in some portions of the army. The best efforts of the generals were at times all but paralyzed by the slanders, the detractions, of a cabal of political conspirators, not one of whom was fit to be mentioned in the same day with either of the two great patriots upon whom the salvation of the American cause at that hour mainly depended. It is to the everlasting honor of these two men that they were in perfect accord, and that Washington and Schuyler toiled and suffered on like brothers, unselfishly, to the end. It is due to them and to the others who were like them unselfish that the end was victory, but it came nearer a defeat than some are now willing to believe.

There were no telegraphs, and the day of newspapers had not come. The people in their scattered homes received only such broken and imperfect war tidings as might reach them through defective reporters and at irregular intervals. They really knew but little of what was going on, and in New York there was no general expectation of an invasion from the west as well as from the north by St. Leger and his Tories and Indians as well as by General

Burgoyne and his British veterans and Hessians. Now, however, something like a newspaper had arrived and was undergoing distribution, for Captain Herkimer and Brom Roosevelt did their duty industriously all the way as they rode eastward. At the fronts of roadside houses, in villages and hamlets, they halted to shout the news to whoever might be there to hear, and to send word to the men in the harvest-fields to get themselves ready to take down their guns from the hooks and mantels, fill their powder-horns, mold bullets, and march out to defend their women and children from the Tories and the Iroquois. They were warned that the tomahawk and the scalping-knife were soon to be at work among them, unless the men who were already in the army were to be strengthened by the men who had as yet refused to believe that any real danger threatened them. Every one who heard passed on the terrible message to whoever was met next, and that person told another and another. It traveled fast and far, and faces whitened and lips trembled and hearts beat hard, and at first there was a kind of panic. After that even the women and boys and girls set themselves at work melting lead and molding bullets, while the men hastened their farm work and grew angrier and more patriotic. Nevertheless, it was as if the greater number put their determinations into about the same form of speech, whether in English or in Dutch:

"I'm goin' in. I'm a'most ready. Jest as soon as the hay and wheat are in and the corn is hoed, I'm goin' to jine old Nick Herkimer or Phil Schuyler; but it's only for this fight, and then come home again. I haven't any idee of 'listing in the Continental army, to starve all next winter."

During the entire war that short term of farmer enlistment was both a strength and a weakness of the patriotic cause. Sometimes it left Washington and his generals almost without the power to act, and at other times the British commanders found themselves suddenly confronted by forces which seemed to them to have risen from the ground. One of these sudden armies was about to arise now. Perhaps its very best recruiting sergeants were in the shape of tufted and painted red warriors, as these visited the affrighted imaginations and feverish dreams of the startled settlers. The fact was that the war itself had hardly become a fact to a great many of them. They believed that it was going on, but it had been a thing kept at a distance while they went along with their accustomed avocations and prospered better than they ever had before. Not a hostile shot had been fired in all the Hudson River valley north of the Catskills. Most of the Mohawk and Schoharie country had lain secure, and so had all the valley of the Connecticut. Beyond that the New Hampshire Grants and the Green Mountains had been as peaceful as a meet-

ing-house until the day when John Stark and Seth Warner and their militia were summoned to demolish the British and intruding Hessians at Bennington.

It was only a few days after Brom Roosevelt made his perilous trip down Oneida Lake, but the month of June was wearing away. The soldiers under Colonel Peter Gansevoort were toiling industriously at their earthworks and palisades with a continual half-consciousness that they were watched by dark eyes in the neighboring forest. General Burgoyne with his whole force was said to be at Crown Point, on Lake Champlain, preparing to move upon Fort Ticonderoga. It was a close and sultry day, with a promise of a thunder-storm to come, when a pair of pony-riders were halted by the sentry at the entrance of the fortified camp of the American army at Stillwater. One of them was recognized by the officer of the guard before he had a chance to give his name or errand.

“Captain Herkimer, hullo! What’s the news from up the river?”

“Good!” promptly responded Herkimer. “The people are waking up. The crops are fine. But St. Leger is at Oswego, and the redskins are rising.”

“It’s high time for our men to rise,” said the officer. “We haven’t half force enough. Burgoyne is coming and Ticonderoga is to be given up.”

“We don’t need Ti,” said the captain. “Our fortifica-

tions are in the woods this side of Lake George. But I must see the general."

"Pass right along," said the officer. "You know where his quarters are. Your father is with him. He got in from Schenectady this morning."

On rode the two despatch-bearers, and for some time before their arrival a pair of remarkable men were facing each other across a small table in a log house near the center of the camp.

"So, General Herkimer, you see how I am hampered," said the younger of the two, a middle-aged man of dignified appearance, whose Continental uniform was in scrupulously good condition. "Congress will do nothing. The cabal is hard at work against me. Everything in this State appears to depend upon you and the Tryon County militia. What about them?"

It might have been roughly said that almost all of the old province of New York west of the lower Hudson River communities was then known as Tryon County, from the very loyal Tory governor of that name. Nicholas Herkimer had been one of the foremost rebel leaders in that hotly contested "debatable ground." He had distinguished himself in the old French and Indian War. At the beginning of this war he had been chairman of the Tryon County Committee of Safety, and had done excellent service in that capacity. He had also been elected colonel of the First

Battalion of the Tryon County militia, and in September, 1775, he had received a State commission as brigadier-general in command of the entire force of the county. Nevertheless, he held no commission from Congress, and was not altogether under the orders of General Schuyler. This made less difference from the fact that not only were they sincere patriots, but old personal friends and connected by marriage.

With reference to the positions which such men held in colonial and later history it may be well to note that while in New England the aristocratic social features brought over from England by many of the early colonists seemed almost to have disappeared, in some of the other provinces they were as strong as ever. The days of democracy had not yet come, although the republic was casting out the monarchy. For example, nearly all the officers of the Continental army from Virginia were as strongly "aristocrats" as was George Washington himself. The New York list at the first contained few names which could not have been recognized as of good social rank. There was an exceedingly good and practical reason for this in the education of the men and in their independence as to questions of personal expenses, but it shortly bore evil fruit. The "Schuyler palace," as it was called at Albany, was one of the occasions for the narrow jealousies against him. The large though plain stone mansion of the Herkimers

near Little Falls, on the other hand, was not so unpopular because it was now pretty well fortified, and its neighbors could speak of it as Fort Herkimer.

Tall, broad-shouldered, vigorous, in spite of his sixty-five years, General Herkimer's burly strength offered a marked contrast to his more elegant friend and commander. He sat still for a moment before replying.

"Philip, my dear friend," he then said, slowly removing from his lips the stem of a long clay tobacco-pipe and blowing out a cloud of smoke, "the farmers are all in the fields. Harvests are good, too, and I'm glad of it. The difficulty is in getting men stirred up. Our people won't fight worth a copper until they are scared half to death. The best of our patriots are in the army already. So, for that matter, are the worst of our Tories. I am inclined to believe that there are not many fighting Tories left at home in this county. Still, there are two lots of stay-at-homes, and it depends a great deal on the drift of the war to decide which of them will take down their guns first."

"Right!" exclaimed General Schuyler. "There is a point there, and I don't know but what Burgoyne is going to raise it in our favor. I myself know scores of half-way Tories who were soldiers in the French and Indian War. Every man of them would turn out under your orders if they believed that the Indians were coming into the valley."

"Maybe they would," growled General Herkimer,

"but they haven't heard any war-whoops yet. Somebody they know will have to be scalped pretty near them before they will believe that their own wigs are in danger. Hullo! What's that?"

It was only a sound of horse-hoofs that ceased at the door of the cabin, and before General Schuyler could make any response his friend was on his feet, stepping forward, and exclaiming:

"Hurrah, general! It is Abraham and my nephew, Brom Roosevelt. News from Peter Gansevoort and the fort. This is just what we wanted."

"Maybe it will not be just what we want," said General Schuyler, gloomily, but in a moment more the pair of travel-tired messengers had dismounted from the third relay of horses which they had used up in their haste to bring their tidings to those headquarters.

Nobody else was permitted to come in with them, and the door was shut behind them, but hardly had the captain rapidly given the first outlines of his story before General Schuyler exclaimed:

"Halt, there! I want Colonel Willett to hear every word of this. I'll call him. He is in the other room now."

He strode to a side door, and his loud summons was promptly responded to by a middle-sized, powerfully built man with a grizzled head and eagle eyes, in a uniform several shades worse off than that of General Herkimer.

He heard why he had been called in utter silence, but the bull-dog look on his face grew more combative. In half a minute the suddenly formed council of war, for such it was, had gathered around the table. No other man in it, and hardly any other border men, had made a record superior to that of Colonel Willett as an Indian fighter, and he was yet to make it still more conspicuous before he should have his last fight with his life-long antagonists, the Six Nations.

"Now, Abraham, my son," said old Herkimer, "go on. I want to hear all the particulars. So does General Schuyler. So does Willett."

In spite of his age and his Dutch coolness the old warrior was evidently becoming excited, for he ended with:

"Willett, the rogues are at Oswego!"

"General Schuyler," said the captain, respectfully, "Brom Roosevelt brought the news to the fort. I wish you would let him tell all he knows before I say anything. Colonel Gansevoort's despatches give his opinion."

"I know what Peter said as if I heard it," replied the general. "Brom, my boy, begin at the beginning. How did you happen to go scouting?"

"Yes, your Excellency," said Brom, quite bashfully, for he was clearly in much awe of the general. "Kraus was up at Oswego. The colonel sent him for a spy because they thought he was a Tory. But he wasn't, and they came pretty near finding him out, and they didn't until it was

too late. The colonel sent Dutcher and Martens and me up Oneida Lake to meet Kraus and bring him home, but they were all scalped but me, and I came pretty near it, but I got away from them, and I had all of Kraus's information before they killed him, and I saw the British boats myself. The Indians and the Cayugas chased me all the way almost into the fort."

"Pretty good!" almost laughed the general, as Brom grew more and more confused as to the right way of telling his story. "Now you keep still and I will ask you a few questions."

It was in replies to General Schuyler's patient and skilful cross-examination that every inch of Brom's remarkable adventures, going and coming, with all that he had seen or heard, came out clearly and fully. All the while the thoughtful commander appeared to be making memoranda and calculations with pen and paper, and his face now and then clouded darkly. So, for that matter, did those of his associates at that table.

"That will do," he said at last. "Herkimer, we must hold that fort! St. Leger is leading what is practically the right wing of Burgoyne's army. He is likely to lead it pretty well. He has come to call out all the Tories against us, and to help Brant to get out the full strength of the Iroquois. It is a shrewd move, but if we can defeat it we shall have half defeated Burgoyne's whole invasion."

Captain Herkimer now gave a detailed account of the condition and armament of the fort, and Brom was further called upon for as good a description as he could give of the keel sail-boats and the bateaux. He dwelt at some length upon the sizes and numbers of the canoes of all sorts, and appeared to have somewhat overcome his bashfulness.

“General Herkimer,” said General Schuyler at last, “this news will stir up the whole frontier. It will create the very kind of scare you were speaking of. You can go out and call for your militia and they will come. Some of them will come right away, crops or no crops. Have them rendezvous at Fort Dayton and at your house. Colonel Willett, I had already decided that the command of any reenforcement of Gansevoort is to be given to you. Take what there is of your own regiment and part of Wesson’s. I left them at Schenectady purposely, and they are all I can spare you just now. That, with what he has already, will give Colonel Gansevoort over seven hundred men. Not a strong garrison, I must say, but one that can hold out for a long while.”

“And that will surely be massacred,” growled Willett, “unless Herkimer can manage to bring us help in time. I’m ready. In my opinion the fate of that fort will now depend upon the kind of guns St. Leger can bring with him. Those large bateaux of his are meant for heavy artillery.”

"So are the earthworks that Gansevoort is building," replied the general. "Tell him to put in all the sods and mud he can. I will have your orders and despatches ready for you this evening. Your whole command must be on the march without delay. Brom, are you tired out?"

"Not a bit, your Excellency," responded Brom, with more of boyish pride than of absolute correctness. "I'm ready to start right away, but the pony I rode isn't fit to go. I'd better take a fresh one."

"Good!" exclaimed the general. "A boy like you can tire out a horse any day, but you need not get away so soon as that. Eat a good dinner; lie down for a long sleep. Then I will have despatches ready for you to take to Gansevoort, and I will tell you now that nobody you may meet on the way must suspect you of having them. General Herkimer, what did you say? Have you any objection to his going?"

"No," replied Herkimer. "He has proved himself a good postboy. Besides, his weight won't use up a pony as quickly as the captain's would."

"Well, Brom," said the general, "that settles it. You may go now, but I want to thank you for what you have done. You have rendered your country a great service, and you have done it bravely."

Brom's face was rosy red under its freckles and tan. It is quite likely that at that moment he was the proudest

boy in America, and this was of itself a great distinction. He felt that he was willing to ride anything and to ride it anywhere to obtain such another bit of commendation from the man whom he considered the biggest general in the whole army, next to General Washington himself.

He went out, however, remarking to himself:

"I'm to keep it a secret, am I? Well, if any fellow asks me where I'm going, all I have to say is that our folks live just this side of Little Falls. But how will I manage to get through that place without anybody knowing it? I must say a word to mother and tell her what I'm doing."

CHAPTER X

THE POSTBOY

IT was three hours after dark one sultry, cloudy night, and the window of Mrs. Roosevelt's sleeping-room was wide open. She was not asleep. She had not even prepared to go to bed. Perhaps there was something in the air which added its weight to some other things which were on her mind. She came and sat by the window for a while, and then she arose and began to walk up and down the room.

"My husband!" she muttered. "My brave boys in the army! Am I ever to see them again? I am not an old woman, but my hair is turning gray. God, take care of them; and, O God, take care of Brom! I am so glad he is with his uncle just now, far away from any fighting. And what dreadful dangers he went through around that lake! I never want to see it again."

At that instant a kind of shadow seemed to darken the window, and she turned to walk toward it. The shadow leaned forward and put its hand upon the window-sill, and a low voice said to her:

"Mother, nobody must know that I've been here, but I couldn't go by without seeing you. I'm carrying army despatches to Colonel Gansevoort."

"Brom!" she exclaimed. "My son, I don't want you to go. This is awful!"

"O mother," said Brom, "the fort must be saved! General Schuyler is sending reenforcements. I can get there before the British do."

"Oh, you will be killed! You will be killed! Tell me all about it."

She could kiss him, she could put her arms almost around him, but she could have hugged him much better if he had not been on horseback. The yard gate had been open and Brom had ridden right in. He now told her that he had not been spoken to by anybody else, and that she must not let his errand be known until after he was well away. He told her all about his council of war with the two generals, and it was her pride over that and his previous achievements which almost reconciled her to his going on to do more of the same sort. Still, she clung to him and would not let him go until his horse at least had had a pretty good rest. Then she kissed him with a hug that nearly pulled him out of the saddle, and he was off. She saw him ride out at the gate and into the shadows beyond, and then she bowed her head upon the window-sill and sobbed as if her heart would break. Probably the mothers

and wives of the Mohawk Valley were suffering more from the war than anybody else was just then.

Morning came, and hardly was Mrs. Roosevelt down and out at the front door for an anxious look down the road by which Brom had gone, just as if he might be still in sight, before she had a visitor, for who should come hurrying in at the gate but Mrs. Anneke Schuyler, shouting:

"Katrina, Katrina Roosevelt, what do you think? Hon Yost is here!"

"You don't say so!" replied Brom's mother. "When did he come?"

"Just an hour ago," said Mrs. Schuyler; "and he brought the general's pony back safe and sound, and he had hardly spent any of the money. He says he went to Albany to see the King and George Washington, but they were both away in the army, and he didn't see either of them."

"Anneke," said Mrs. Roosevelt, doubtfully, "sometimes I think that boy knows a great deal more than we give him credit for. He does things that no crazy man could do. He is real bright at times. Anneke, you must not tell anybody, but Brom was here last night. He has gone to Fort Schuyler with despatches. Troops are coming to strengthen the garrison. Oh, it was so hard for me to let him go!"

"Why, Katrina," said Mrs. Schuyler, "he is only carrying letters. It isn't as if he had enlisted in the army or was going into any real danger. He will come right back again with more letters."

"There is danger everywhere," said Mrs. Roosevelt, "and I'd rather have him at home. But General Schuyler praised him for what he had done, and I am so proud of him!"

So the two women talked about their boys and comforted one another, and it was a good while before either of them remembered her breakfast. They were compelled to do so then, for a gaunt old Dutch servant of Mrs. Roosevelt came out and all but pulled them both into the house.

It was late in the afternoon of that day when a very weary-looking boy, on a horse that was as tired as he, halted at about a half mile east of the end of the bit of corduroy causeway in the river road to the fort.

"Here I am," he said, aloud, as he looked around him. "Captain Herkimer said that the enemy would be likely to watch for such fellows as I am on one side or another of the swamp. He said the old Indian trail would be dry ground at this season. Nothing smaller than a full company of riflemen would be safe on the corduroy. I'm going all the way around."

He wheeled into the woods at his right, and he had not far to ride before he found the narrow path along which

the red men had tramped back and forth during nobody knew how many generations. Chiefs and warriors had trodden it year after year long before the foot of any white man had made its mark upon the soil of the New World. Nevertheless, it had latterly been somewhat neglected, and an ordinary despatch-bearer from the American camp at Stillwater might fairly be supposed to be ignorant of its existence. Probably that was one of the reasons why Brom found it unguarded and put the swamp behind him without having been ambuscaded. As he came through at the western end he paused and looked around him.

"Right here," he was thinking, "Captain Herkimer and I had our skirmish. I feel kind o' queer, as if I might hear a whoop at any moment. Oh, how tired I am! Well, there's a better day coming! Both sides are getting tired of this war. When it's over I suppose all these woods will have to come down. Won't there be chopping, though, before all the clearings are made! It makes me tired to think of it."

Perhaps it was a thing worth thinking of, however. While he was in the very middle of what is now the old and thickly settled State of New York he was nevertheless on the edge of the forest wilderness, and all the vast country west of him was covered by a growth in which no chopping had as yet been done. There were a few French settlements on the lakes and here and there along the banks

of the Mississippi River, but even among these there had not been much cutting of timber. It was to be a hundred years before the people of the United States would be induced to pay any serious attention to the fact that their supplies of lumber could not last forever at the rate at which they were felling the trees.

As for Brom Roosevelt, his deepest present interest in the tree question confined itself to the unpleasant consideration that any one of the splendid trunks around him might have behind it a red man or a Tory, with a rifle in his hand and in his heart a disposition to shoot a bearer of army despatches. He plodded on slowly, watchfully, nearly a mile, and he was beginning to breathe more freely. The distance between him and the fort was lessening, and he believed the most dangerous points to be behind him. It would almost do to ride back to the road. He halted to think about it, and the next moment he was glad indeed that he had not gone any farther in that precise direction. The woods were open, and he could see what was going on at some distance ahead of him. Not that anything was really going on, in one sense, for at about a couple of hundred yards' distance he saw half a dozen men lying on the ground at the crest of a knoll, with their guns thrown forward as if they were watching something. It was not likely to be four-footed game, and these watchers were in the red uniform of the British army, with the exception

of two, who were in homespun and buckskin. There was no Indian among them to turn and look behind.

"Tories and British," muttered Brom. "I can get away from them. I'm glad they're not Indians, or I'd be pretty sure to be seen."

It may be that the very intentness of their watching was his best protection as he turned away to the left, but at that moment there were rattling reports among them and beyond them, and one of them sprang to his feet and fell heavily to the earth. The others lay still, firing or loading, and there came a sound of whooping from farther on in the forest.

"The road now!" exclaimed Brom. "Any skirmish here might take them all away from that. I must ride hard if I'm to save my scalp!"

Even his weary horse appeared to understand what was required of him, and in a few minutes his hoofs were on the river road.

"Hurrah!" shouted Brom, but from a short distance behind him a chorus of angry shouts and yells responded, and it was well that his horse was a good one with some speed remaining in him.

The fact was that he had ridden all the way around a trap which had been carefully set for the capture of any messenger on his way to Fort Schuyler; and, on the other hand, Colonel Gansevoort had been sending out scouting

parties to look out for that sort of business, and there had been more than one small but sharp skirmish within recent days. On rode Brom, with a pair of light-footed red men not far behind him, but these soon gave it up, for they were aware that they might at any moment chase their intended victim in among his friends, and that these were riflemen.

He dashed out from under the cover of the forest, and even his horse neighed loudly with excitement as he pulled him in. Louder yet, as if in sympathy with the horse, rang out a long succession of cheers from a crowd of men which came pouring out of the open gate of the fort. The skirmish party had retreated unharmed, and these, too, were cheering behind him. Hardly had he dismounted at the gate before he was made aware of the special reason for so much enthusiasm. He was the first man of any kind to break through and bring in news from the outside world during nearly a week, and the hearts of the harassed garrison had been sinking heavily.

The first thing that Colonel Gansevoort did, after hearing a verbal report from Brom and without waiting to read his despatches, was to call his entire force together on the parade-ground and to shout to them the good tidings of their coming rescue. Two whole regiments, he told them, under Marinus Willett, whom they all knew, and just behind them was to be General Herkimer himself with the militia of Tryon County.

"First rate," growled one of the men. "I feel better'n I did. I don't know how many men there are in a regiment nowadays, and I don't know how long it'll take to get the militia together. Anyhow, that there Brom Roosevelt is a plucky boy. He's right down lucky, too, for how on earth he got through puzzles me."

Just so it appeared to puzzle almost everybody else, even after Brom tried to explain the precautions and the roundabout path he had taken.

"I guess, after all, it was the skirmish party that helped me through," he told the colonel, and the veteran somewhat drily responded:

"Well, yes; that was what I sent it out for. I knew that some fellow or other would be coming, and I meant to do the best I could for him; but I supposed he would keep to the road, and I was sure that he would lose his scalp if he did, in spite of the whole garrison."

The colonel had read his despatches, but he questioned Brom almost feverishly concerning all that had been said in the headquarters of General Schuyler. He wanted to know what had been said by all the people whom Brom and Captain Herkimer had talked with; but at last he put all the other things away and began to ask again about the boats that Brom had seen on Oneida Lake or that Kraus had told him of.

"That will do," he said. "I know all about boats. If

St. Leger's cannon were at Oswego, then he is ready to ship them now. We shall see his bayonets glittering in the woods almost any day. If Willett doesn't get here first they can about walk on into this fort. If we should resist, as we must, and if they should take it by storm, as they would, not one man in it would be left alive. Anyhow, I shall fight it out to the bitter end."

It was almost necessary to send a strong guard with Brom, so that the swarm that wished to question him might be forced to let him get his supper and go to bed. When he got up next morning he was a kind of newspaper of which there was only one copy in the fort, and it had to be passed around among the men until they had read all there was in it over and over. He had to talk pretty steadily until he went to bed again, and all the brave fellows who kept him busy were listening with a clear idea in their minds that almost certain death was before them unless this news of his was every bit true. Probably there could be nothing else so good as that to increase any man's interest in his morning or evening journal, but the publishers can not generally make use of it.

Colonel Gansevoort's anxiety had not all misled him. St. Leger's cannon had indeed arrived at Oswego, but there had been a scarcity of horses, so that the work of transferring artillery and stores to the foot of Oneida Lake had gone on more slowly than he had desired. Then had come

the not very safe or easy task of carrying all those things up the lake. Days of storm had lost just so much of valuable time. One of those stormy days had also upset a large bateau laden with provisions which had been intended for the troops and not for the bass, pickerel, pumpkin-seeds, and other finny inhabitants of that beautiful sheet of water. On the other hand, Colonel Marinus Willett had traveled to Schenectady at even a more rapid rate than Brom himself had taken. His troops were ready at the word of command, and there had been no delay. After that the tough frontiersmen had proved themselves good walkers, able to make more than half as many miles a day as could any horses they were acquainted with. On an occasion like this they were willing to do their best, spurred on by the assurance that if they did not they might make themselves responsible for a terrible massacre of the all but doomed garrison at Fort Schuyler, and also for an Indian invasion of the Mohawk Valley. So the excited riflemen marched well, and it was only a few days after Brom's arrival when the head of a dusty and weary column of men came out of the woods along the river road in sight of the fort.

Even when the reenforcing troops marched out of the woods they could not have known that it was still a post of the American army by reason of any flag upon its ramparts. At all events, the red-cross flag of England had not been sent up, and there were swarms of men who rushed

out to meet them, yelling and cheering like mad. That was all the nationality evidence upon one side, but the men of the garrison also had been compelled to accept Colonel Willett's column in a kind of blind faith, for it carried no more flag than did the fort itself. This was a most remarkable military occurrence in the middle of a great war. Here were parts of several veteran regiments, here was one of the most important posts in the United States, and yet, by some phenomenal oversight, there was not one solitary banner to float over the fortress in token that it had not surrendered. For that matter, indeed, there would have been nothing to pull down in case it had wished to surrender.

Wildly enthusiastic was the welcome given to the rescuing force, and now an actual count proved that the defenses, in their improved condition, were manned by seven hundred and fifty men. They had several cannon, too, of various sizes, and for these they were provided with nine rounds of ammunition. Therefore it would not be well to fire useless salutes or in any other way to waste whatever good there might be hoped for in the future uses of those guns. However, all were glad to know that the new arrivals had brought provisions with them and that more were close at hand, for the stock in the fort had been running low.

The coming of the reenforcement must have been

known to the enemy, but the patrols sent out had discovered no sign of them in the vicinity. No attempt was made even to interfere with the provision wagons, as these rolled slowly in. Everybody was in a fairly cheerful state of mind, and for that very reason all the cheerful minds began to think about the flag, and there was an animated discussion of the manner in which so serious a difficulty might be overcome.

"Gansevoort," roared Colonel Willett, "we can do it! There are a score of women in the fort, and they all brought their needles with them. We must have them go to work and make a flag. We'll set up the tallest kind of flagstaff right away, and when St. Leger gets here he'll know what nation this post belongs to."

The presence of all those women and the children had added one more sad feature to the horrors of the situation before the reinforcements arrived. Out came the needles now, and with them came the inventive genius of the patriotic needlewomen. They called for all the white shirts there were to spare among the garrison, but their offerings of red flannel were much in excess of the white cotton or linen. So much for the stripes of the new standard, and when they came to the stars for the field Colonel Abraham Swartwout of the Continentals, from away down in Dutchess County, brought them an old blue cloak, still bright in color here and there. He told them it had seen

service enough as a cloak, and he was willing to have it cut up for the good of its country. So the blue field was made and the stars which were put into it were of at least full size, and the flag was ready to be run up. All the work on it had been done in one day, so many and so skilful had been the hands which had manufactured it. The flagstaff was already in place, and before evening of the day after the arrival of the troops the banner of the young republic was flying gallantly in the breeze to tell that the Americans yet held Fort Schuyler.

CHAPTER XI

PEERPLEXITY

BROM ROOSEVELT was standing away at one corner of the works, gazing up at the standard of his country, when he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and a voice that he had heard before said to him:

“Ugh! Like flag? Gansevoort like see flag? Sir John say he will come pretty soon. Pull flag down. Brom lose hair. Better not come back.”

“Hullo!” exclaimed Brom. “Ough-na-ga-ra, how did you get here?”

“Ugh!” replied the Indian, with a mocking smile on his face. “Heap spy for old Sir John. Go back, tell him about fort.”

Away went Brom to the colonel, only to be cheerfully answered that in all probability the Oneida had told the exact truth, and that he would be permitted to go back whenever he might choose to do so.

“Why, my boy,” said the colonel, “everything he has ever told us has been found to be correct. He is worth a great deal to us. Didn’t you say that he warned Captain Herkimer of that ambush on the road?”

"Yes," said Brom; "I guess he saved our lives."

"Well," said the colonel, "that is as near to being friendly as any man could reasonably expect of an Indian. I rather wish to have St. Leger know about our reenforcements. The Oneida may tell him there are ten thousand of us, if he wishes to do so. It might make the British come on more cautiously, and what we most want is to save time. General Herkimer needs every day he can have to gather in his militia."

Brom had to be satisfied with the explanation, and he thought that he understood one point of it pretty well. Beyond a doubt the cunning red man derived genuine enjoyment from his peculiar business of serving both sides at the same time, and he was pleased with the freedom it gave him for coming and going. He had no patriotic scruples to trouble him.

The river road had been opened by the troops under Colonel Willett only to be quickly closed again. Hardly had the last wagon-load of provisions wheeled in, giving the garrison an estimated supply for a siege of six weeks, when the scouts reported that the woods between the fort and the swamp were infested by Indians, and that no more small parties ought now to venture within rifle-shot of cover in any direction without exercising the greatest circumspection.

"Then the siege is really going to begin," thought

Brom. "Here I am corked up in the fort, and there won't be any more errands for me to run. I wish I could go and see all those boats come up the lake, but I can't. I suppose my canoe will be among them. Poor Kraus! He and Dutcher and Martens won't need any more canoes. Neither will some of the Indians that killed them. There will be a good many killed on both sides before the fight for this fort is over. Sometimes I wonder if any of us will ever get away."

That was a doubt which was troubling the minds of a number of men, and there might possibly have been desertions but for the certainty that the fort was the only safe place in that neighborhood for any of its garrison to be in. If any man's lack of courage should induce him to run away into the woods, it would be something like a hunt for a tomahawk.

Brom had no thought of running away, but he was conscious of a strong feeling of curiosity, and it was growing upon him. It was as hard for him as for others to be cooped up in that manner, in complete uncertainty as to what might be going on, and he made up his mind to speak to Colonel Gansevoort about it. He did so with a great deal of diffidence, and he was more than a little surprised by the answers he received. He found that his commander knew some things already and was quite willing to obtain further information.

"Why, yes, Brom," he said. "I would not let any man go out into unnecessary danger, but there is not so much just now. I am a good deal responsible for you, but you may scout around a little. It is July now and we have no news from General Herkimer, but we know a great deal about St. Leger. Some of his forces are at the head of the lake, and he is pushing out a little into the woods, but he is not anywhere near ready to strike at us. All of his men that were here in front of us seem to have fallen back. Perhaps he is waiting for cannon or for his reenforcements. How I wish I knew exactly about that! Ough-na-ga-ra brought in a copy of one of the proclamations that St. Leger issued to the people of the Mohawk Valley, calling upon them to return to their allegiance to their rightful King on penalty of being tomahawked and scalped. I suppose he intended to have me see that proclamation, and the men, too, to scare me a little and dispirit the garrison. I think his threats may help Herkimer in getting out his militia. Don't go too far. See all you can, but go in the daytime. You can do no good at night. Do not fire off a gun if you can help it."

Brom went away as well pleased as if he had received permission to go out deer-hunting, but he had been ordered to have a talk with Colonel Willett before he could be allowed to leave the fort on any such errand, for he was in especial charge of all the scouting.

"Bless your soul, my boy!" said the veteran; "the woods out there are pretty clear. I was out all day yesterday and didn't smell anything. Keep along pretty near the old wagon-road. Go from tree to tree. Keep all the while under cover. Turn back to the fort as soon as you have seen your first Indian. Don't wait to find out what he is doing."

It would plainly be enough to find out that the enemy were there, and the colonel did not speak of evilly disposed white men.

The evening which followed was a pretty feverish time for Brom. It was hot weather, anyhow, and there was hardly air enough stirring to flutter the new flag. All the area within the lines of fortification wore a busy appearance, for nobody cared to stay inside of any log house or tent, but not many would have cared to take moonlight strolls into the surrounding country. The broad level of stubble wheat-field between the fort and the river was a sort of exception to this rule; but such men as ventured out in that direction went in squads and took their guns with them, and none of the women went more than a few rods beyond the palisades. Brom's time for going out had not come. He did not appear to be looking for company exactly, but he wandered restlessly all around the parade-ground and along the lines of the earthworks. He talked with the men, here and there, and he found that most of them

were as uneasy and dissatisfied as he was. He was just beginning to feel tired and sleepy at last, when his eyes caught a glimpse of something which drew him suddenly toward one of the smoldering camp-fires. Cooking had long since ceased, and nobody needed to linger near a fire for the purpose of getting warm; but there in the dull, red light, close to the glow of the dying embers, stood a form not much larger than his own, dressed in blue homespun, and he instantly exclaimed:

“Oh, heavens, if there isn’t Hon Yost Schuyler! How on earth did that half-crazy crow manage to get here? He isn’t a soldier. I don’t know if he is altogether a fool, either. What would his mother say?”

He stepped quickly forward, and as he drew nearer he could hear more and more clearly a not unmusical voice singing:

“The King will have his own again, his own again;
The King will have his own again
And rule among his loyal men
Or we’ll know why!”

It was a fragment of a well-known Tory song, borrowed from one of the old Jacobite ballads of England, but that fort was not exactly the place in which one would have expected to hear it sung.

“Hon Yost Schuyler,” exclaimed Brom, “do you just stop that thing or you’ll get a horsewhipping! What if any

of the men should hear you? How did you happen to be here anyhow? You ought to be back at Little Falls."

"Hi, Brom!" responded the new arrival. "Hon came in with the wagons. He came to save the fort, but they won't let him have a gun. 'The King will have his own again, his own again, his own again.' I heard that when I was down at Albany. I can sing. Hurrah for George Washington! I'm a Tory-ory."

He appeared to be laboring under some half-suppressed excitement, which may have been too much for whatever brains he had.

"Shut up, Hon!" said Brom. "I don't know what on earth I'm to do with you! Your mother will be scared half to death!"

"No, she won't," said Hon, with a strange glimmer of cunning upon his face. Burgoyne is coming, coming, coming, and then she'll be a Tory-ory. So will everybody. So am I. Hurrah for General Washington! It's all right, and the King will have his own again."

Right there his monotone singing was interrupted, for the hand of Brom went sharply over his mouth, and another threat of a sound horsewhipping then and there appeared to produce a quieting effect. He even gave a fairly intelligible account of the manner in which he had managed to reach the fort by driving one of the provision wagons and keeping still.

"You had better keep still now!" said Brom, angrily. "One of the men might knock your head off. But your mother isn't any kind of Tory, and she never will be. You don't know enough to know what you are. Go to your wagon! Go to sleep! I'll see about you in the morning."

The glimmer of half-lunatic cunning again shot across the dull face of Hon Yost Schuyler, and he turned away as if to do as he was bidden.

"Brom won't get Hon whipped," he chuckled. "I know Brom. He's a fool, and he'll get himself scalped. I'm a Tory-ory-ory, and the King will have his own again, his own again, his own again. Hi! Flag made of old shirts. Hi!"

He was gone, and Brom stood looking after him with a perplexed and angry expression on his face.

"To think of him!" he said. "He's my cousin, and a nephew of General Schuyler himself. He is a good deal more than half witted about some things, too; but he's kind of flighty, and nobody can guess what he may be going to do next. He ought to be shut up."

His worry about his cousin kept him awake for some time after he lay down upon a blanket, which was all the bed he cared for that night, but he went to sleep at last, and he was not disturbed until one of the men all but stumbled over him as the relief was on its way to change guard

at the gate at daylight. Up he sprang, and the sergeant of the squad remarked:

"Hullo! Is it you? All right, Roosevelt. We have our orders about you. I am to let you have the password and countersign when you go out. Go and get your breakfast. I hope you'll come back with your hair on your head."

Brom was quite ready for his first duty, but he did not feel like lingering long at the fire where it was already cooked for him and for the returning guards and night patrols. Another kind of fire was beginning to burn within him, and he was quickly at the gate.

"Who would have thought of a man fool enough to be a deserter!" remarked the officer on duty, just after giving Brom the countersign.

"Why, Lieutenant Stockwell," said Brom, "has any fellow really run out among the redskins? How did he pass the guard?"

"He got out by way of the river-side," replied the lieutenant. "He was seen at about midnight, they say, but he was already too far out for anybody to go after him. It won't be found out who he was until roll-call. He won't be caught. There will never be any need for shooting a fool who deserts from this fort just now. He won't be heard of."

"Poor fellow!" said Brom. "The tomahawks will take

care of all that." But he was dimly aware of a half-formed thought which came into his head as the lieutenant repeated the word "fool."

He could not think any more about it just then, however, for in a moment more he was strolling along, in an apparently listless and aimless way, across the sloping reach of open ground between the fort and the forest. This had been widened of late, and all the trees cut down had been carefully burned to ashes, so as to leave no cover for creeping enemies. It may be that Brom had made a study of that matter, for the sentries who watched him from the rampart were astonished at the suddenness with which he vanished out of their sight. He had but dropped behind a fragment of log which had been neglected, and he did not rise to his feet again until he had crept all the way to a clump of sumach-bushes which was well within the shelter of the untouched woods.

"Here I am," he thought, as he did so, "and I believe that the safest thing for me to do is to push straight ahead."

That was an idea which had already been put into his mind by Colonel Willett, who had more than once suggested that there was no reason why the British commander should be risking any of his men too near the fort now that it contained a sufficient garrison for sending out strong sortie parties. As for the Indians, they were well known

to be careful of themselves, and they were not likely to be making unprofitable ventures.

Brom scouted on from tree to tree, taking surveys ahead, and never exposing himself for a moment, until he believed that he must be more than two miles from the fort. He had reached a spot from which the old Oneida Lake road stretched out ahead of him in almost a straight line for a considerable distance. Moreover, it went down a gentle slope, and he paused to consider the situation.

"I must go farther than this," he was thinking. "I haven't found one thing of any value, except that the woods behind me must be clear of the enemy. Even the deer have come back this morning, and I could have shot one of them. I'm not out for that kind of game, though. What's that?"

It was a sound which might have been heard in that forest in the old French war long ago, but which probably had not disturbed the solitude since then. It was a distant outpouring of brass music, and it informed Brom not only that St. Leger had something like a military band with him, but also that his regular troops had been boated up the lake and were on their march to capture Fort Schuyler. The next minute also he believed that he could hear whooping, as if, perhaps, the British army melody had stirred up the Iroquois music. Brom was not in the road itself, but out at one side of it, hidden among some dense hazels, and now

he was to have another tremendous astonishment. From out another part of that same half-acre of excellent cover he heard yet a different sort of music arise and walk forward. Or rather it went with a kind of dancing step, as if the singer were keeping time with his feet as he walked and sang:

“The King will have his own again, his own again,
The King will have his own again
And rule among his loyal men
Or we’ll know why !”

“Hon Yost Schuyler!” exclaimed Brom. “I can’t go out after him. So he was the deserter! I wonder if he has seen me, or if he would betray me. He is just cracked enough to do that. I do believe he would tell them that I am here. I’ll only wait one moment.”

He was gazing down the road with breathless excitement, for now the head of a British column came in sight, and the very small band in front of it was playing vigorously, when Hon broke into a run and went down the road, flourishing over his head what might have been a packet of papers. Perhaps they were letters which he wished to deliver, and Brom thought of that. Out to meet him in advance of the column strode an officer in a green uniform; but Brom was not near enough to be aware that it was to Sir John Johnson himself that Hon surrendered that bundle of “spy mail” from his Tory correspondents at

Albany. It had been a dangerous experiment, it might be said, to send such things by such a messenger, but then he was the last person of whom there would have been any suspicion on the part of the American authorities. Brom himself remarked concerning him, with strong disgust in his voice and face:

“Hon is a spy, is he? I always said that he had plenty of brains for any kind of wickedness, if he hasn’t sense enough for any good. There are a good many Indians with that regiment. It’s a big one. I can see the bayonets glitter away down the road. Colonel Gansevoort must know this.”

He turned upon his feet and hurried away, feeling that he had an important load of scouting news to carry back to the fort. While he was making his way through the hazels, another and another officer had joined Sir John, and he was reading to them very full accounts of all the doings of the American forces at and about Stillwater and Schenectady, the reinforcements sent to Fort Schuyler, and the rally of General Herkimer’s militia at Fort Dayton. Much of this they already knew, but not all, and not by any means in such full detail. At the same time their subordinates were asking all sorts of questions of Hon Yost Schuyler. At the beginning of his cross-examination he was excited, and appeared to be not a little in fear of some of the darker countenances which he saw around him. He vigor-

ously asserted that he was a Tory-ory, and that the King would have his own again, but he grew calmer and his responses were more connected and intelligent than might have been looked for by one who knew him. The questioners seemed to care most of all for whatever he had seen between that place and the fort, and not many minutes had gone by before the fact escaped him, with or without any purpose on his part, that he had left Brom Roosevelt about half a mile up the road watching their arrival. A dozen fierce whoops rang out, and twice as many painted braves of more than one Iroquois clan sprang away in hot pursuit of the daring scout who had ventured so very near them.

That is, he had been so near, but he was not so at this moment. He had not done any running, indeed, but had slipped along as cautiously as he had come, keeping a sharp lookout for possible hidden foemen. That was the reason why he had gained less than half the distance to the fort when his pursuers set out after him, and they were all fleet runners. On he went, walking faster and more recklessly as an unavoidable conviction grew upon him that danger must surely be coming behind him.

“Their advance-guard must be a good deal beyond that place,” he was thinking; “but I don’t care for the redcoats just now. They would never catch me. Oh, but isn’t it an awful thing about Hon! Why,

he will never be allowed to come home again. I must tell Colonel Gansevoort about him, though, I suppose. I'll think about that. It may not be necessary."

Whoop! Whoop! Whoop! Fainter at first, and then louder and louder, came to his ears from the forest behind him, for the runners appeared to have forgotten their cunning in their eagerness. He was glad enough that they had let him know they were no nearer, for he was now at no great distance from the edge of the clearing at the fort.

"They might follow me right on into that," he said aloud. "I must be ready for a shot at the first one that comes within range."

Little good that might probably have done him if it had not been for a vague anxiety in the mind of Lieutenant Stockwell. When that officer was in turn relieved at the gate he had reported at headquarters concerning Brom Roosevelt, and had added:

"Colonel, how many men ought I to take to go and have a look at the line of woods? If Brom gets in, that may be his worst place to pass."

"Just so," replied Gansevoort. "Take your own company, every man, and I will have a support ready. Keep under cover. Signal for help will be three shots fired at seconds, and then another. Go ahead!"

Out went the lieutenant, and he certainly took with him quite as many men as he had permission for. Some

came without calling, for there was a spirit of fight in the fort. There may have been forty in his own company, but he did not reject anybody, and there were twice as many in the force with which he marched out across the clearing. Colonel Willett went with them as far as the gate, and he remarked to Stockwell as he left him:

“I’m half afraid we sha’n’t see that boy again. In my opinion it was too dangerous a duty to let him go on. Bring him in if you can.”

Very naturally the general impression of peril close at hand was all the while increasing, and all the more so for the uncertainties of the situation. The lieutenant and his party, nevertheless, had been out in the edge of the forest a considerable time before anything happened to excite them. Then the lieutenant suddenly exclaimed :

“Hark! Do you hear that? Forward! Tree to tree! Watch! Coming!”

Nearer, nearer came the war-whoops which were following the returning scout, and brave as he was his heart was thumping unpleasantly.

“That means that they have seen me,” he was thinking. “There they are. They are scattered. Only two or three are close up. This is as good a tree as I can get. They would follow me out into the clearing.”

It was a fallen tree that he had dropped behind, and his

nearest enemy was within a hundred yards of him when both of them were startled by three rifle reports near at hand, one after another. A third followed after a brief interval, but the very first had finished the running of that nearest warrior. Brom himself was trying to draw a bead on one of them, and yet he knew too much to leave himself with an empty rifle.

"Too bad!" he groaned. "I'm caught between two fires. Who would have thought of their being behind me? They haven't hit me yet. Hullo! that redskin went down. It's our own men! I'll take this chance."

He fired as he spoke, and then he lay down behind his log to reload his rifle, with a clear idea that he might not have time to do it, and that all that was left him was to fight some Indian with his knife as well as he could. It was a terrible moment. All the woods beyond him seemed to swarm with whoops and yells, and all the trees behind him must have brought their guns with them, so sharp was the rattle of shots.

"Our fellows are giving it to them," thought Brom. "I hope there are enough of them. Any mere squad would be wiped out in no time."

It was no mere squad, and the next thing he heard was the voice of Lieutenant Stockwell singing out—fine music it was, too:

"Roosevelt! Bully for you! Creep in! We can hold

them in check till the support gets here from the fort. Be quick now. They are coming!"

More warriors were indeed making their appearance, and it even looked as if one of St. Leger's abandoned ideas might have unexpectedly come back and there was to be a surprise of the fort, after all. Brom darted in among his friends, and the firing continued, but all the while they were slowly retreating. The Indians were advancing, however, and the dangerous moment would arrive when the trees and their protection were to be left behind. The exposure in that clearing promised to be all but sure destruction for so small a force; but it was not to be so small. The excitement of the garrison had become uncontrollable, and it was the entire regiment of Colonel Willett that poured out pellmell behind their leader. It had been in vain for him or even for Colonel Gansevoort to try and stop them. All that could be done was to get them into some kind of order and to summon the rest of the garrison to arms in haste, lest such a reckless proceeding as this should result in a disaster. It surely would have done so if St. Leger and his regulars, with Sir John Johnson and his well-disciplined Tories, had been near enough to charge those scattered riflemen while they were unprotected by their entrenchments. They were not there, however, and the fiercest Iroquois warriors were willing to pause in the edge of the forest and whoop and yell without going any farther just then. There

were, indeed, too few of them for a successful rush upon Willett's regiment after it had formed. Brom also was quite willing to have the firing cease while he and his rescuers marched triumphantly into the fort.

"My boy," said Colonel Willett, "those redskins had a narrow escape. How we would have pelted them if they had come out into the open!"

CHAPTER XII

THE RUNAWAY

THE recall was sounded, and the overhasty men fell steadily back in good order. After all, it had been their complete readiness and their apparent numbers which had checked the intended rush of their enemies. Not one of them had been killed, and a couple who were grazed by bullets were hardly hurt enough to be sent to the hospital. On the other hand, several of the advancing warriors had imprudently exposed themselves to good marksmen, and a sharp warning had been given as to what might be expected by any force undertaking to massacre the garrison of Fort Schuyler.

It was now noon, and there was an apparent lull in all operations. Colonel Gansevoort himself might turn away from his post of observation at the rampart and summon Brom for a more complete report than he had yet been able to make, except to Colonel Willett. That officer came with him now, as did several others, and he persisted in speaking of what he called Brom's wonderful "luck."

"Any other fellow I know of," he said, "would have surely gone under."

"Never mind that now," said Colonel Gansevoort, se-

riously. "Brom, tell us what you have seen and where. How near are the British?"

"They are right here, your Excellency," replied Brom. "I saw regulars and Royal Greens, and I think I saw cannon. It was a long column."

"That's it!" interrupted the commander. "That is what I needed to know. Now go back and tell me every inch of your scouting."

Brom did so, and he did it pretty well; but right here was settled all his uncertainty as to his duty concerning Hon Yost Schuyler. It was simply impossible not to tell how he had seen him run forward and deliver his papers. It was hard to do, but he did it.

"Let him go," said Gansevoort. "I saw him in the fort. Now they have one lunatic more among them, but you need not tell anybody else. It is a matter of no great importance. Poor fellow! There are spies enough. Now, my boy, I'm going to send you right home to your mother. You have done splendidly, but you have done enough. You are not an enlisted man, and you have no business in this fort during a long siege that is coming."

"How will you send him?" asked Willett. "He can't fly."

"No," replied Gansevoort, "but the patrol reports that the river road is clear. It will not be so for any length of time, but I can send off Brom at once. He can carry

some letters to General Herkimer, too, and that will be a service worth while. Go and get ready, Brom."

"Willett," said Gansevoort, the moment he was out of hearing, "there is not anything else of more importance than my despatches to Herkimer. I will get them ready now, and Brom must take his chances. This fort is to be a death-trap unless we are helped in time."

"I know that," said Willett. "I knew it when I came. But I have a great deal of confidence in old Nicholas Herkimer."

Brom, therefore, was to be sent out of harm's way on an important errand because he was a mere boy, too young to be killed in that fort. He was not feeling badly at the prospect of going home, and he ate a very hearty dinner. After that he went to hunt up his friend Stockwell. He had questions to answer concerning his exploits in the woods, and then he asked, as if it were a matter in which he took especial interest:

"Lieutenant, about that deserter. You said that at roll-call it would be found out who he is. Did they find out? I want to know."

"Not an enlisted man is missing," said Stockwell. "It might have been one of the teamsters, but all of them seem to be here. Most likely he has been scalped by this time, whoever he is."

Brom knew better than that, but he did not say so. He

was glad, however, that no suspicion as yet attached to Hon, and that his wild escapade was known only to a few of the higher officers.

"Colonel Gansevoort will know what to do," he thought. "I don't believe he wants Hon shot any more than I do."

As for that light-headed spy himself, he was in no immediate danger from any kind of angry patriots, for he was wandering vaguely around among the motley forces of the English King. He admired the uniforms of the regulars, and of such of the Royal Greens as had preserved any large part of their originally bright emerald clothing. He had almost equally wondered at the finery of some of the red men, for the chiefs especially had deemed this an occasion for putting on all their medals and feathers. The Canadian troops, on the other hand, were about as unattractively arrayed as if they had been only so many of General Herkimer's Tryon County militia, fresh from their corn and wheat fields. On the whole, he appeared to be having a pretty good time, and to be disposed to sing.

An observer with more brains than Hon, or with what he had in better order, might have picked out one Indian as being worth a more careful study than any of the others. He carried no gun, a knife and a light tomahawk at his belt being his only weapons. He was bareheaded, and was naked to his waist. He may have owned many medals,

but he was wearing only one of them, a broad disk of silver, richly engraved. He was powerfully built, but not by any means ferocious looking, and he could smile quite pleasantly when answering any person who spoke to him. His face was dark rather than copper-colored, and just behind its darkness there was lurking an expression of fiery self-will and of what seemed to be keenly watchful intelligence. He was everywhere greeted with great respect, for this unornamented, quiet-mannered Indian, gliding from point to point with such panther-like activity, was in many respects the best general in that army. A Mohawk on his mother's side, an Onondaga on his father's, with a better "white" education than fell to the lot of many white men in those days, Joseph Brant (Tha-yen-da-ne-gea) had received a half-civilized training without losing one jot of the terribly destructive instincts of the savage. He was the hero of many a dark story of border bloodshed, and he was yet to win more of the same kind of celebrity. Nevertheless, a day was to come when this pitiless, red-handed scourge of the frontier would be found taking a deep interest in the education and conversion of his people, and he was to translate into his native tongue the entire Gospel of St. Mark.

It is possible that if Brant had had the entire management of St. Leger's advance there might have been different results, but he was not then in command. It was also

well known that there were occasional collisions between him and his really warm friend, Sir John Johnson, and that the latter was now and then compelled to curb the fiery energy of the great war-chief of the Iroquois. As for his present position with reference to St. Leger, no general officer or commander of the British army would for one moment have consented to surrender his own views to those of either a red man like Brant or a mere provincial like Sir John, or, for that matter, as in the case of General Braddock at Fort Duquesne, to such a man as Colonel George Washington of Virginia. It may therefore have been for some such reason that the river road had not yet been taken possession of, and that no further steps toward the investment of the fort were immediately made. Only an hour or so after midday, however, Brom was again summoned to headquarters. His business there was rapidly transacted, and the colonel's instructions ended with:

“Now, Brom, it is time for you to be off.”

“I'd rather stay here and fight, sir,” said Brom.

“That is what I won't let you do,” laughed the colonel.

“You have run risks enough. Besides, General Herkimer must know just how we are fixed, and you can tell him a great many things that I have not written. You are a good horseman, and a light weight if you should have to run a race. Take these despatches and put them under your belt, inside.”

Brom did so, and drew the buckle tightly, with a sudden thought in his mind that he would be willing to fight the whole British army, or even to run away from it, rather than to lose those precious papers.

"You are to go alone," said the colonel. "It won't be on a pony this time. I have picked out the fastest horse in the fort. He can carry you fourteen miles an hour for an hour or two. Ride him to death, but get through to Fort Dayton. If he holds out you ought to be there tomorrow forenoon. If the despatches are captured they are in a cipher that the enemy can't read. You are really the biggest part of the errand, for your tongue will be better than any pen and paper."

Brom was now standing up very straight, with a feeling of the great importance of the duty entrusted to him, and he walked out of the quarters ready for anything. Then he did not feel quite ready for the remarkable animal which was led up for him to mount. Could that big, lean, raw-boned sorrel be the best horse in Fort Schuyler? To be sure, he appeared to have no extra weight of flesh to carry, no fat, but what a head and tail! He had not been curried recently, and even the saddle on him was anything but a beauty. Besides, the brute had the wickedest kind of a sidelong glance in his eyes, and this seemed a pretty plain indication of bad temper if not of a disposition to fight at once.

"Up now," said the colonel. "Don't waste a moment."

Two soldiers were firmly holding the sorrel while Brom sprang into the saddle, grasped his rifle, tightened his belt, had his little sack of rations and other things buckled on back of the saddle, and took the rein.

"Let go!" said the colonel, and the sorrel went forward with a long and angry bound. A rear and then a side plunge followed, but Brom kept the saddle, and the beast under him may have noticed that the eastern gate of the fort was open before him. If so, that must have operated as a kind of invitation for a runaway, and he went to it without any guiding. Through and out he dashed, with a yell of equine satisfaction at having his own will, and then he went on along the river road at a run. The garrison cheered heartily as they saw him go, for they all thought that they understood the matter, and not many of them would have been willing to exchange places with the rider of that racer that afternoon. To their perceptions he might be going to charge right through a line of Tories and Indians, and they believed that he had but a narrow chance of passing so much as the first mile of his perilous run.

Colonel Gansevoort may have thought differently, for he remarked:

"Colonel Willett, that may be the only man to escape

from this fort. Anyhow, the rest of us must take our chances."

"His going is likely to make them better," responded the veteran. "I'm glad that Schuyler and Herkimer are to know just what they must do."

It was undoubtedly well that they should have full information. They already knew how slowly the militia were coming in and how impossible it was for General Schuyler to spare any more men from his thin lines at Stillwater and Schenectady. He was doing his best, and so were other patriots, and the scare concerning the Iroquois was really beginning to produce its due effect. A little more scare was now coming full speed.

The sorrel made short work of the distance between the fort and the corduroy at the swamp. If there were really any British or Indian scouts anywhere along that route, he went past them at a rate which would have made any attempt at marksmanship ridiculous. The log causeway had been partly bedded with gravel, but it was still rough enough to induce him to hold in a little, and Brom had a chance to draw his breath.

"Hurrah!" he gasped. "I never rode so fast before in all my life. If he could keep it up we'd be there in no time. That is, if I could keep it up, too, and I'm not quite so sure about that."

He was still going at a good gallop when he reached

the other end of the corduroy, and he was beginning to experience a pleasant sensation of probable security. He even ventured to tighten his rein a trifle, but the sorrel responded to that assertion of proposed control with a fierce lashing out with his hind heels and a forward plunge. It was just in the very next second of time that Brom's good feelings flashed away from him, and he excitedly exclaimed:

“There they are! Indians and white men! More than a score of them. They are running toward the road. I'm done for!”

Perhaps he might have been but for two things. One was that his enemies, with one accord, had paused to send a volley at the spot where he and the sorrel had been when he pulled on the rein. The other thing was the wrathful and elastic spring with which the bad-tempered runaway had left that bit of road behind him and resumed his all but frantic speed. The bullets may all have been well aimed, but, even as the triggers were pulled, their target had vanished. The lead was all wasted, and so was a terrific volley of whoops and yells which was fired away next. The sorrel may possibly have understood that those vocalists were intending to stop him, and he did not propose to be stopped. He had been cooped up in that wretched fort for more than a week without an hour of healthful exercise, such as his tastes and constitution called for, and with

all sorts of evil rumors in the air around him. He therefore felt it his duty to himself to make the best of his way to the more peaceful settlements, for even a sorrel horse as thin as he had a right to leave the Iroquois behind him and to save his scalp, and that of his rider.

This was at least what he was now doing, for before a gun could be reloaded he was half a mile away from the muzzle of it, and was running at a pace which would have distanced the fleetest brave in all the Six Nations. One more mile went by, however, and he seemed to feel that he had done all that belonged to him. He did not wait for any pull upon the rein, but almost abruptly came to a dead halt.

"It's a good thing that he didn't do that on the corduroy," thought Brom. "But isn't he ugly! The only way to make such a horse do anything is to have him think you want him to do something else. Let him rest a bit. After that I'd better offer to run him back to the fort. Then I guess he won't stop much this side of the Hudson River."

They were in the middle of a wide reach of natural meadow, and there was no cover near them to conceal an enemy. It was a good place to rest in, and they had won a long distance from any of the forces which were now rapidly surrounding the fort. Colonel Gansevoort had not been any too soon in sending off his despatches calling for

speedy help. It was at about this hour that Colonel Willett came to him to report:

"The woods are full of Indians. We can keep the space between this and the river clear, but not a patrol can venture out on the land side."

"Very well," replied his commander, quietly. "There's no harm in that. We do not wish to send out any patrols. I have more confidence than ever that we can hold this place till Herkimer comes."

"That's it!" exclaimed Willett. "Till he comes. He will, but it is as sure as death that he will have to fight his way in. Colonel Gansevoort, mark my words. There will be one of the bloodiest fights that have ever been known on this frontier, or anywhere else, when Tha-yen-da-ne-gea tries to cut off Nicholas Herkimer and the Tryon County riflemen."

"There will be hard fighting," said Gansevoort. "It will come pretty soon, too, if Brom gets through. He will, if that savage-tempered sorrel keeps up the pace he set out with. He is a mighty good runner, but I'm glad that young Roosevelt is such a good rider."

Brom was a farmer's boy and was used to horses, but never before had he been upon anything precisely like that sorrel. He may have been a thoughtful horse, to have chosen so safe a place to stand still in, and he may now have undertaken a general consideration of the circum-

stances in which he found himself. Undoubtedly, he had escaped from the fort and its disagreeable confinement, and he had enjoyed a splendid runaway. He had been shot at, too, and he had managed to dodge the flying lead with a skill and promptness which were a credit to him. Nevertheless, whether or not he felt any pride or satisfaction over his performances, he was aware that fast running on a warm day will have its effects, and he was beginning either to recover his temper or to have less of it, which would answer just as well. He champed his bit and pawed the road for a moment, and then he stretched out his gaunt, bony head for a long neigh. It was a relief to him to yell in that manner, but he was no Indian and he could not also whoop. So he reared gently, came down upon his feet again, and set out once more with a swift but easy gallop, which he could probably keep up much longer than he could his former racing pace.

"Good for him," thought Brom. "This won't tire him out so soon. We are miles away from the fort already. I wish I could get to Fort Dayton as straight as a crow flies. The distance is a good deal longer by the windings of the river and this road. If I can gallop him pretty steadily till sunset, I shall be near two-thirds of the way. Then I can rest him for a few hours, and get there in the morning without killing him."

The sorrel was not making any remarks, but if he had

spoken he might have expressed his derision of the idea of killing a shape of skin and bone and wickedness like him by a gallop of that length, done in two pieces. At that day there had been no exact survey or measurement, and, as Brom said, the crooks of the river and the curves around the hills, and some of the climbs over them, had a great deal to do with the length of the journey. At the end of another hour the sorrel was one of the quietest of horses, and appeared to care less about escaping from the British army, but he needed no urging, and his gallop was still a good one. He was willing to take occasional halts and drinks of water, and when the sun was going down he stood still of his own accord in front of a log farmhouse and called out loudly for whoever might be within hearing. He really need not have done so, for Brom's approach had been seen from quite a distance. There were men, women, and children hurrying to the door and to the roadside to meet him, and to eagerly ask where he came from.

"Fort Schuyler!" he shouted. "Going home to Little Falls."

He was interrupted right there, for the foremost man, a tall borderer with a flowing white beard, had already taken the sorrel by the bridle.

"Jump right down," he said. "You've just been running your horse. We'll take care of him. Down with ye, and come in and get something to eat. The militia around

here are to join Herkimer on his march. We're all ready. I want to shoot some redskins, I do. Tell us what's going on."

Brom was quite ready to do that, and the sorrel was led away to a stable with an assurance from the farmer, and perhaps from the horse himself, that he would be ready for another push when called for.

It was full time for both the animal and his rider to call it a day's work, but that of Brom had only changed from galloping to news-telling. What between the women and the men he was pumped dry of every small fragment of information concerning the stirring affairs at Fort Schuyler, and one small girl clambered into his lap to ask him:

"Did 'oo 'calp any Towies? Pop kills Towies. So do Bub an' me."

The tone of feeling in that household was plainly manifest; and Brom felt entirely at home, especially so after he had tumbled into the bed which was provided for him when the talk was over.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MILITIA

“THAT will do, Brom,” said General Herkimer. “I can understand the whole situation. Our men have rallied pretty well, but I wish there were more of them. I wish they were under better discipline. For all that, if I can get Gansevoort to cooperate with me we shall be a good match for all that St. Leger has with him. Part of his troops are not equal to ours in the woods. I am more afraid of Brant and Sir John with their Indians and Tories than I am of the British regulars.”

“I saw them,” said Brom, “and they march splendidly.”

“They can’t do that among trees,” laughed the general. “I have a lot of the best fighters on earth. Over eight hundred of them. The worst of it is that I have five or six colonels, and every one of them has an idea that he ought to be in command of a brigade. There is no time now for any kind of drill or organization. We must move as we are.”

Brom was sitting in a parlor of the Herkimer mansion

at an early hour of the day following his runaway from Fort Schuyler. The sorrel had done all that Colonel Gansevoort had said he would, and did not appear to be any the worse for it. He had even exhibited healthy signs of temper that very morning, and he had traveled viciously fast along the eastward road. The startling news which he and his rider had brought was already circulating rapidly among the patriotic militia at Fort Dayton, and it was arousing them to a high pitch of excitement. They were loudly proclaiming their readiness to march at any moment, while their experienced commander was painfully aware that they were by no means prepared to do so.

As for Brom, he was evidently in favor of immediately jumping the entire force to the open space in front of Fort Schuyler, or at least to the road beyond the corduroy, and he ventured to urge once more the dangerous condition of the garrison, but his uncle did not condescend to argue with him. It was more as if he were thinking aloud when he drew a rough but vivid picture of the dangers besetting the march which was before him, with Brant and the Iroquois in the woods all the way, and with St. Leger and his redcoats, Canadians, and Tories to be met at the end of it, or perhaps before he had gone half-way.

It was now necessary for Brom to bring out the strange story of Hon Yost Schuyler, and the general heard it all through in silence.

"The wretched lunatic!" he then exclaimed. "I did hear that he had been seen in Albany. The Tories there have made use of him, have they? Well, all that they could send to St. Leger is old news now. It is of about as much value as a last year's bird's-nest. He could not tell them how many men are enlisting in Tryon County, or how many we have here at Fort Dayton, or when I shall move. I must stir up things."

Out he went, for among the important things to be stirred up were the supplies of ammunition and of provisions for the march. There were wagon-loads of the latter yet to arrive. As for tents and camp fixtures, the hardy men of the frontier hardly gave them a thought in such fine summer weather. It was as if they had never heard of rain-storms or were determined to do without them for that trip.

Brom was now free for the time being, and he took advantage of it to make a hurried visit to his own home. He had a grand time there, for his mother's delight at seeing him almost blinded her to the awful risks he had been running. She listened to the story of them, and she hugged him tremendously, but they were things of the past, and here was her boy. It was true, moreover, that the excitement of the hour and the presence of so strong a force of militia added a great deal to the customary hardening of a frontier woman by the continual experiences of

her life. Such women knew but little about genuine peace. There had been an interval of a few years, from the close of the old French war to the outbreak of hostilities between England and her colonies, when western New York, or what is now the middle of the State, had been almost peaceful; but there had all the while been a steady flow of old stories and new rumors until this present trouble came. Confirmed habits of thought and feeling had only been made somewhat stronger, so that most women looked upon their husbands, sons, and brothers as necessarily Indian fighters. It seemed almost a matter of course that they should go out with their rifles and come back to tell what had been done with them—if indeed they came.

It is not always easy to determine exact dates of the several occurrences in a feverish and somewhat disorderly campaign, ending in so confused a back-and-forth rush as this did, but all the accounts preserved make it look as if St. Leger and General Herkimer set their military watches to keep time together. Probably it was on the 1st of August that the American commander declared himself ready to move, and ordered his men to be under arms early on the next day. The British forces were fairly in position around Fort Schuyler on the same day, but they had failed to thoroughly occupy the southern bank of the river, so that communication between the garrison and its friends was not entirely cut off. A few more Hessians and Cana-

dians had arrived and an additional swarm of Indians, but the latter were coming and going in a perplexing manner, so that no trustworthy account of them could be kept. It is recorded that General Burgoyne, at Lake Champlain, found his copper-colored muster-roll in like manner difficult to keep. The artillery had now been safely boated up Oneida Lake and through the woods, so that some of the guns were in position on August 3d. Among them were mortars of moderate sizes, and from these a few bombs were thrown on the 4th, as if to let the garrison know what was in store for them. Another lesson was obtained from a number of four- and six-pounder cannon-balls. It was discovered that while such a shot might splinter a palisade and compel the putting in of a new bit of timber, a similar iron casting might bury itself in a sod earthwork and do no harm whatever. Therefore the smashing of the American lines would have to be performed by the heavier pieces, when the hour and the ammunition for these should arrive. The guns of the Americans were persistently silent, for they had no ammunition to waste upon woods and underbrush. On the 5th there was a great stir in the fort, for it was hardly daylight when the sentries reported that the enemy were in motion, as if they intended to attempt something important. More bombs and cannon-shot were thrown, and there were bodies of troops to be seen moving here and there among the trees or out into the open.

"There go Butler's Tories," remarked Colonel Gansevoort, as he watched them through his glass. "There are Sir John Johnson's Royal Greens. I think those others are the Canadians. What crowds of redskins! Colonel Willett, what do you think of all this? They make a good show."

"That is just what they are doing," responded the sharp-eyed old fighter. "They are telling us what we wanted to know, though."

"Perhaps they are," said Gansevoort. "It is one of two things, and I wish I knew which. Either they are moving to meet Herkimer or they are trying to scare us. If it means Herkimer there is nothing that we can do yet, but we can be ready for whatever may turn up. If it is intimidation it won't work. We know about how many there are of them all the better for this. We could beat them off if this is all."

There was genuine courage in that confident assertion, and it did good when it was repeated among the men, for whose benefit it may have been intended, for the British forces had been so advanced and maneuvered as to greatly increase their apparent numbers. It was afterward made known that St. Leger took a different view of the matter, for that was the date of a despatch which he sent to General Burgoyne, assuring him of the fall of the fort and promising to meet him at Albany. Once more, also, there was an

agreement of the watches, for that was the day on which General Herkimer's advance halted within a mile or so of Oriskany. He had with him his eight hundred men and all his colonels, and there were already half-mutinous voices finding fault with him for his slow and cautious manner of going forward. It was hard to tell just when his march from Fort Dayton actually began, for fragments of his several militia regiments moved out along the road without express directions, and he was compelled to get his force in hand as he went along. It was at about noon of the 3d of August when the heated, angry, and all but disgusted commander turned from scolding some of his stragglers to exclaim:

“Brom, get rid of that sorrel! Right away! He has been of use in running errands, but I can't risk his running away with you under fire.”

“Under fire?” replied Brom, in astonishment. “Why, we are a good distance away from the British yet, I guess.”

“So do they all guess!” growled the general; “and I wish I knew. All of these hot-headed fools think that the enemy will wait for us at the fort, but we may strike them at any moment. Send away that horse!”

It was an order to be obeyed, but the sorrel had been the means which Brom had taken for stealing his chance to follow the troops without any other permission. He had managed to be on hand for the delivery of quite a

number of military messages to different parts of that disarray. The ill-disciplined horse had now to be left behind at a farmhouse, and Brom was thenceforth to perform his duties as volunteer "orderly" on foot, but he was no longer in any danger of being sent home as being too young for a march into a battle. Moreover, he had been well aware that the general had something weighing upon his mind, and it was only a little after he returned from disposing of the sorrel that he heard him say to one of the most trusted of his many colonels:

"Colonel Van Slyck, I sent Wagner to Colonel Gansevoort. I would give all I'm worth to know if he succeeded in getting into the fort. He is just the man to do it. All our cooperation with Gansevoort depends upon that. Now, if anything should happen to me, you ought to know what the arrangement is to be. You and Colonel Cox, for you will be in the advance."

"General," replied Van Slyck, "we all hope you won't get hit, but if you are knocked over it will leave me in command. What is it?"

Colonel Cox also was listening when the general slowly said to them:

"This force alone might very likely be outnumbered. Their spies must have told them all about us. We may count on that. If they move out in this direction that will be the chance for the garrison to make a sortie and take

them in the rear while we strike them in front. Wagner is to tell Gansevoort that we will be at or beyond the mills at the mouth of Oriskany Creek on the 5th. Gansevoort is to let me know of Wagner's arrival by firing three heavy guns in succession. Then, if he can, he is to make a dash on the British while they are moving."

Both Van Slyck and Cox agreed that the plan was a good one, and it was shortly communicated to all the other colonels. Then it drifted out among the rank and file, and General Herkimer's military secret had escaped from him. Nobody knows whether or not it traveled all the way to the British army, but if it did it would partly explain the meaning of the grand parade and sham attack upon the fort on the morning of the 5th. The fact was that Colonel Gansevoort, as he watched it, was yet without the information which Wagner was to bring. He could suspect, but could not know that all the columns which were displayed in sight of him were not to return to their camps, but were really moving out toward Oriskany in preparation for a well-devised trap which was to be sprung on the morrow. All might yet have gone well, for the Americans were in a good position at the mouth of the creek on the 5th, but on the morning of the 6th the excited militia and some of their colonels became unmanageable. There were loud voices which accused the general of sluggishness, old age, incompetency, and even of cowardice. The uproar went

on until he was stung into ordering a forward movement, in spite of the fact that no guns had yet been heard from the fort. For all that anybody knew, Wagner's daring undertaking might have failed entirely, and he might be dead.

All the wagons were left behind, of course, and the column formed for a march which could not by any possibility end without a battle with superior numbers. It was a responsibility which the men had taken upon themselves. It might have been noted that the prudence of the general still insisted upon providing a strong rear-guard, although it was the common opinion that no rear-guard was needed, and that on such an occasion as this every last man ought to be in the front rank or beyond it. The regiment of Colonel Vischer had been selected for this duty, much against its will, and it may have consisted of about two hundred men, all of them ready to rush forward as soon as they should hear the expected firing at the front. They were to hear firing enough, and all their discontented grumbling was uncalled for.

However compact General Herkimer might endeavor to keep his force, its formation was unavoidably long for its numbers, and its several small divisions were all the more readily separated because of their defective compliance with his orders. It was in the delivery of these that Brom Roosevelt more than once wished sincerely that he had

some kind of quadruped under him. It was fatiguing work, for the day was close and sultry, and he said to himself:

“ Anyhow, if there’s going to be a battle, it will be an awful hot one.”

Steadily onward marched the overbrave little army, and all apparently needful precautions were taken against surprise, but these were much more obediently attended to at the front than anywhere else. There had been a need for more thorough watchfulness, and for slower marching than the general could compel. A terrible trap had been skilfully prepared by the cunning of the Iroquois war-chief, and it was under his personal supervision. The American advance came out into a marshy but narrow level, which was almost dry at that season of the year. It was bordered on the north by rocks which very nearly made a ravine of it. There were dense woods in all directions, but there were fewer trees upon the level, and the cover there was not by any means as good. It was all the way around this naturally prepared place that Brant had sent his warriors through the forest that morning, with such white forces as were added by St. Leger, and all were lying closely concealed, waiting for him to give them the signal for striking. In the road in front was the main body under St. Leger and Sir John Johnson and Butler, and only enough had been left around the fort to preserve an appearance of carrying on the siege operations.

CHAPTER XIV

ORISKANY

“BROM,” shouted General Herkimer, “there are signs of the enemy in front, and in all directions at once. I must go forward. Run back and tell Colonel Vischer to close up immediately. He must look out for himself. They will be behind us as well as in front. I expected this.”

The general rode forward, and Brom darted away upon his terrible errand, but the trap had been sprung, and the army was in it.

“Colonel Vischer,” shouted Brom, as he came running his best to the head of that doomed rear-guard, “General Herkimer says forward! The British are here. They are in the woods. He says they will attack——”

“Go back and tell the old woodenhead I know all that!” interrupted Vischer. “It’s just as I told him. We ought to be forward now, where the enemy are. There are none anywhere near us.”

At that moment a rifle-shot and a peculiar yell away in the front was followed instantly by what seemed like a long string of similar shots and yells at irregular intervals

among the rocks and woods. It was Brant's signal for the onset, and the answer to it at this part of the line sent a ball through the heart of a soldier within ten feet of Colonel Vischer. This was altogether unexpected, and he said excitedly to Brom:

"He is right! He is right! Go quick! Tell him that the attack has begun in the rear, not in the front. We are surrounded!"

It was just as Brom sprang away that all the crags and bushes in the neighborhood seemed to be alive with whoops and shots. "Redskins and British!" he exclaimed. "Hundreds of them!"

Their very numbers may have accounted for an apparent lack of force in the first attack upon the American front, but here Brant's trap was a complete success. Some of the militia obeyed orders and pushed on to join the main body. Others stood their ground and fought as well as they could. More broke away to find cover, and were either killed or taken prisoners rapidly. The fact that so many were permitted to surrender proved the presence of British officers as well as Iroquois chiefs, but the strength of General Herkimer's force was seriously diminished at the very beginning of the battle. His main body was unbroken, however, and there was no wavering at the front. Brom was not there when the general rode along his lines, shouting orders to his men and sending them into

the best attainable positions, without any regard whatever to his own rash exposures. There was an incessant crash and rattle of rifle and musket shots, but the enemy had been discovered before they could get in too closely, and the American marksmen had been instantly at work. The surprise had therefore been a comparative failure in this part of the field.

"Cox! Van Slyck!" roared the general. "Hear that? Where are you? The rear is already attacked! I knew it would be. I sent word to Vischer. Hark, now, for the guns from the fort!"

"No, general," called out a soldier; "they won't hear again. There they lie, out yonder. They had gone on to reconnoiter, and they both went down at the first fire."

"Oh, my God!" groaned the general. "Brave fellows! Fight, men! Give it to them! Brom, did you see Colonel Vischer?"

"I told him," yelled Brom. "I saw his men break and run. The British and Indians are behind us. I think I saw Brant himself."

"Then he isn't here," growled the general. "He is by all odds the most dangerous man among them. What? Brom, I'm down!"

He had been dashing hither and thither, instructing his men to form circles in the cover, so as to protect each other while reloading, and always to keep loaded rifles in reserve.

He had been a constant target for the enemy, but every shot had missed him while in motion. Now, however, as he halted a ball had shattered his right leg below the knee. The horse under him sprang forward and fell dead. There were dismayed shouts among the men who saw him fall, but the old hero raised his head and assured them pluckily that he was not hurt to speak of. Two of them were quickly at work bandaging his wound, but they were not surgeons, they were not skilful, and they did their best under a shower of bullets.

"Brom," said the general, calmly, "take the saddle and put it there against that tree. I must sit up and see what's going on."

The girth was cut. The saddle was taken from the dead horse and put in position. General Herkimer was carried and placed with his shoulders upheld by that hard cushion. All the while he could hear the whizz of flying lead and the triumphant shouts and yells of the enemy. As for Brom himself, he was not exactly hit, but a shot which barely missed him took off a long strip from the skirt of his buckskin hunting-shirt.

The general went on with his orders and his words of brave encouragement, and the assailing forces discovered that they had struck upon something that was wonderfully tough and unyielding. Those who were now pressing forward at this part of the field were Butler's Tories and Sir

John Johnson's Royal Greens, for the greater part, and they were hard fighters. Their first rush had been followed up so sharply that there were numerous hand-to-hand encounters, and in more than one instance old Mohawk Valley neighbors were brought face to face with knife or hatchet in hand. These were the deadliest encounters of that bloody day, for they were the final settlements of old and bitter personal feuds.

It was now nearly noon, and the only important advantage apparently gained by the enemy had been the destruction of the rear-guard. In all the rest of the field of battle the Tryon County men were holding their own, and they were showing themselves exceedingly good marksmen, to the great cost of their red and white assailants. There should have been light enough at midday to go on with the combat—light enough to load and fire by—for the day had been bright and sunny. But now Brom suddenly exclaimed, as he stood by his uncle at the foot of the tree:

"Hullo! What's this? The sun can't be setting. There, I believe I hit that fellow! No, it isn't the powder-smoke. There's lots of that."

The gloom of which he complained was deepening swiftly, and the smoke of the firing was indeed increasing it as it settled down over the woods. Darker, darker, and men who were about to rush upon one another paused to look anxiously upward; but now there came a tremendous

explanation of the mystery. In the forests the coming of a storm can not often be foreseen, and here was one which had taken both armies entirely by surprise. Louder than any of St. Leger's guns had sounded at the fort, and with a more sonorously continuous reverberation, was the first peal of that midsummer thunder-storm. It was something more than that, however, for it was what is called a cloud-burst. In a minute after the thunder crash the forest-trees were bending under a hurricane which carried with it torrents and sheets of rain in a blinding deluge, which rendered further rifle practise out of the question.

"Bless my soul!" said Colonel Klock to General Herkimer, as the wounded commander lay drenching at the foot of the tree. "If this battle hasn't been pretty nigh drowned out, I wouldn't say so. You couldn't load a gun without wetting all your powder."

"That's as bad for them as it is for us," said the general. "Well, we have fought one battle, and we are not whipped yet, by any means. There will be another battle to fight as soon as the storm is over. It will be a fight to the very death, too."

There was to be a long pause at Oriskany, but during all that morning there had been a deceptive show of activity among the half-deserted camps of St. Leger's army around Fort Schuyler. The batteries appeared to be manned as usual, and more than one battalion of men marched ostenta-

tiously from place to place. In fact, the business of making believe to threaten the fort had been a little overdone. So keen an observer as was Colonel Gansevoort found his suspicions more and more awakened as to what might be the real meaning of so much restless activity. He was therefore all ready to be set on fire when, just before the storm came on, he was startled by the arrival of Wagner with General Herkimer's message. The brave despatch-bearer had been compelled to hide in some underbrush more than one night to escape the vigilant patrols sent out by Brant to intercept precisely such dangerous fellows as he was. In an instant the whole truth flashed upon the minds of Colonel Gansevoort and his officers.

"I'm afraid it's too late," he exclaimed. "There may be a battle going on at this very moment. Colonel Willett, what do you say?"

"It's never too late!" roared Willett. "I must charge the camp of the Royal Greens with every man we dare send out. Hurrah for old Herkimer! Fire your signal guns as soon as I'm out beyond the lines."

He had his force in shape quickly, for every man of the garrison was eager to volunteer. It was then a sore trial to their patience to be interrupted as they were by the thunder-storm, but they consoled themselves by assuring each other that this shower must be wetting any battle.

"I hope it may keep both sides half drowned till we are on the march," said Colonel Willett. "Sir John's camp is our nearest point, and he may have taken all his men with him if there's a fight on hand."

It was yet another remarkable instance of two sets of military plans which appeared to fit in with each other. The storm ceased. The flooded streams and the swelling river itself dashed on angrily under the returning sunlight. The men on both sides at Oriskany loaded their pieces as well as they might under the dripping trees. The dead Americans that could be reached by the Iroquois—and all the wounded whom they could touch were now dead—lay in a ghastly, bloody silence where the scalping-knives had left them. Just as the last distant peals of thunder died away the awful struggle was renewed. St. Leger had received a moderate reenforcement of some of the Royal Greens under Major Watts, and he needed them. His losses had been much more severe than he had expected, and parts of his forces were beginning to doubt the complete winning of that battle. The fresh men were put in front and a charge was made, nevertheless. Once more the fight became largely hand to hand and the combatants were falling fast, but white men only were going down, for the Indians were showing signs of discouragement. Possibly their superstitions had been appealed to by the thunder-storm, but a more important consideration for them

was that at first they had been called upon to bear the brunt of the encounter, and that they had lost many of their best warriors, including several chiefs and leading men upon whom Brant depended for a large part of his influence. He never again had so much personal power after the Oriskany fight, and the strength of the Six Nations received a blow that day from which it never afterward recovered.

General Herkimer was still lying under the tree which had partly sheltered him from the storm, but he was feverish from his wound, and he was glad when Brom brought him a gourd of muddy water. It was neither cool nor bright, but it would do, and he had just taken it from his lips.

“Brom!” he exclaimed. “Hark! Do you hear that? One—two—three! It is Gansevoort’s signal! Thank God, Wagner did get in! Oh, if he would but sally out and strike them at once! Their camps must be almost empty.”

“Isn’t that musketry firing, too?” said Brom.

Whether or not the reports of many rifles could be heard at that distance the roar of Gansevoort’s cannon was plain enough, and it sent a thrill of dismay among the British and Tories. Worse by far was its effect upon their red allies, for now Herkimer’s men were advancing with a shout instead of retreating, and they were fighting as des-

perately as ever. Well they might, with nothing before them but death in case of defeat. The Iroquois began to fall sullenly back, looking despondently at one another, and there was an ominous shaking of tufted heads.

“Oonah! Oonah! Oonah!” The retreat cry of the allied tribes sounded from point to point through the forest, and the red men everywhere obeyed it in spite of all that Brant could do to rally them. They had lost too many. Even Vischer’s unfortunate regiment had cost them something in its surprise and desperation.

The Tories and Canadians had also suffered severely. They were drenched, weary, disappointed, and as they saw their savage associates evidently retreating a sort of panic seized them. They wavered for a moment, and then they broke and fled, closely pursued by the Tryon County militia. Some were killed, some were taken prisoners, and the victory remained with the Americans and their brave old commander, although it does not appear from any record that St. Leger’s regulars were at fault. They are supposed to have been held back as a reserve, and to have partly covered the retreat.

General Herkimer was still lying at the foot of his tree. He had mustered strength to direct and encourage his men as long as they were within hearing, but he was now alone, for even Brom Roosevelt had joined in the pursuit. Brom had plied his rifle as busily as had any of the rest, and if

he had hit anybody the fact that he was only a boy could not have interfered with the work of a bullet from that weapon. He had therefore counted for one more good marksman in an hour when the last man able to shoot straight was of especial value. He had tried to imitate his wounded commander and keep cool, but it was now too late for that, and his excitement carried him on among the foremost. It was probably as well for one poor fellow that it did so, for a squad of Butler's hated Tories had been overtaken and was going down rapidly, and just beyond them was a queer figure which was rigged in an old uniform coat that must once have been worn by a member of the Royal Greens. It had even picked up an empty musket, and it was flourishing that while it sang:

“‘The King will have his own again, own again! I’m a Tory-ory-ory! And rule among his loyal men.’ Hurrah for George Washington!”

“Don’t hurt him!” shouted Brom. “He’s crazy. Let him go!”

“No, we won’t,” growled back one of the men. “I know who he is. We won’t kill him, but he knows enough to be tied up. We’ll take him in and see what the general will do with him. He ought to be hung.”

“Take him,” said Brom. “I’ll tie his hands. He’s a complete fool.”

“Fools can do mischief,” said the rifleman, and Hon

Yost Schuyler's hands were tied behind him with a strong cord and he was hitched to a sapling, while his captors followed the fugitives.

There might, perhaps, have been a more vigorous and prolonged following of St. Leger's forces if General Herkimer had known what was going on elsewhere; but he had now prudently sent orders recalling his men. He would, nevertheless, have been glad to have heard of the remarkable feat performed by Colonel Willett. It had seemed to Colonel Gansevoort that the sortie from the fort was a terrible risk to take, and he had almost felt like countermanding it. What if the dash should be met by superior numbers, and if its defeated remnant should come fleeing back in disorder, and be followed right into the fort by British bayonets and Indian war-whoops? Such a result would have been entirely possible if St. Leger had not taken with him so nearly all of his forces to surround and destroy the militia. Even then he had not taken any too many, while he had left some of his camps almost deserted. That of Sir John Johnson's Royal Greens contained hardly more than a corporal's guard after the departure of Major Watts to reenforce the troops at Oriskany. It had been partly fortified, but over the half-made entrenchments now poured the men from the fort with hardly any opposition worth mentioning.

“We must clean out this place!” shouted Colonel

Willett. "We needn't care to go any farther. Here are just the things we want. Loads of 'em."

The garrison of Fort Schuyler was indeed greatly in need of many of the things which had been quite liberally provided for Johnson's men. What was almost as agreeable, there were wagons and horses in the camp for purposes of rapid transportation. Therefore it came to pass that while the last of the hard fighting was going on at Oriskany the spoils were gathering at the captured camp to the reported amount of twenty-one wagon-loads. There were provisions, clothing, blankets, tents, miscellaneous camp equipage, five British flags, and all of Sir John Johnson's personal baggage. The latter was of especial value, for it contained a quantity of papers and military correspondence, full of information not otherwise attainable. Colonel Willett and his men were in high spirits over their prizes, but if they had known the condition and manner in which St. Leger's army was returning from the battle-field they might have taken a lesson from Brant himself and have set an ambuscade of their own.

As it was, both the red and white warriors of the King were permitted to get themselves together and into their camps without further molestation. When they came to count up the cost of entrapping General Herkimer the Indians were mourning the loss of seventy chiefs and braves killed outright, and perhaps twice as many more badly

wounded. Nobody knew precisely how many. In killed, wounded, and prisoners the British, Tories, and Canadians actually reported enough to bring up their total losses to over four hundred. Something like the same numerical result was sadly declared on the American side. About two hundred had been taken prisoners, mostly from Colonel Vischer's rear-guard. Only fifty were merely wounded, while the deadly work of the Indians was witnessed by the fact that the dead were one hundred and sixty.

Terrible indeed had been that hard, strangely conducted fight at Oriskany. At its close a careless critic might have said that General Herkimer's movement had resulted in failure. His advance had been checked with disastrous losses and the fort had not been relieved. The siege would still go on, and ultimate surrender or capture by storm appeared to be now inevitable. This was the superficial view of the situation, but, on the contrary, it was St. Leger himself who had been severely checked. If the forces which he commanded had previously numbered about two thousand men, one-fourth were gone, for the Indians were going and the influence of Brant over them had been badly shaken. A correct estimate of the results obtained would be that the right wing of General Burgoyne's army was so badly defeated at Oriskany that the subsequent victories over his army at Stillwater and Bemis Heights became pos-

sible. Taking account also of the blow given to the Iroquois and the great stimulus to the volunteering of men for General Schuyler's army, the battle of Oriskany takes rank as one of the most important of the War for Independence.

CHAPTER XV

THE WOUNDED HERO

BROM ROOSEVELT turned back like the rest when the recall order reached him. Hon Yost was untied from the sapling, and was led along with his hands still pinioned, and he appeared to be somewhat under the strong excitement of the battle, as if it had been too much for his thin brains to recover from immediately. He enraged the soldiers by his occasional outbursts of Tory music, and they threatened to hit him on the head if he did not keep still. One strong-armed militiaman actually did something for silence with a stinging blacksnake whip, and as Hon felt the lash he yelled:

“Hurrah for George Washington!”

In another moment, however, he was humming in a much lower tone, “And hurrah for the King, God bless him!”

The wounded were cared for and the homeward march began the next morning, as it would not do for so severely diminished a force to linger within striking distance of its enemies. Brom’s place was with the wagon which con-

tained his wounded uncle, and it was worth while to see how the old hero bore himself. It was very well, moreover, that he still had two or three of his colonels left, as he was suffering much from loss of blood and exhaustion. He was cheerful, and he insisted upon still giving orders; but he was no longer a young man to endure so much, and there were those who shook their heads and muttered sorrowfully that the Tryon County militia would soon have to find another commander. Never again, they said, would it be led into battle by the man who for so many years had been its most beloved and trusted officer.

While the Americans were in this manner retreating toward Fort Dayton it was necessary for St. Leger that he should declare his rout at Oriskany a great victory, and that he should so announce it to Colonel Gansevoort. He did not mention the breaking up of the camp of the Royal Greens as any part of the success which he had won, and he may have supposed that nobody in the garrison of Fort Schuyler was aware of the exact nature of his defeat of General Herkimer. If so, he was believing too much, for more than one messenger from the general had made his way into the fort. There were also friendly Oneidas who were more than ever ready to bring in news in token of their good-will, and also, it might be, of their increased clearness of perception that the British were not having things altogether their own way. It had been reported that

not one Oneida was known to have been killed at Oriskany, and this may not have been true, but the warriors of that tribe were less than ever disposed to listen to the appeals of Tha-yen-da-ne-gea to become targets for the American riflemen.

All the besieging camps appeared to be once more in order. Entrenchments were constructing nearer and nearer to the fort, as if it were proposed to capture it in something like a civilized and scientific manner. The artillery again began to demonstrate how small was the damage it could do by pitching round shot into earth. Occasional bombs were thrown, as if to indicate how small was the supply of explosives on hand for that species of military amusement. The garrison suffered no great harm from the few which burst above the surface of the ground, and those which exploded under it did no harm at all. Nevertheless, St. Leger felt sure that his victory and his cannon-shot and his bombs must be producing some effect, for hardly were his victorious troops again in their positions around the fort before he sent in a flag with a demand for immediate surrender. It was somewhat informally made, as if it were an experiment, and it was curtly rejected. More time was allowed to pass, and then, on the 9th of August, a pompous and imperative message to the same effect was sent in writing. A major of the regular army was deputed to carry the letter to the obstinate commander of the doomed

fort, and he was received at the gate with all formality. A part of this formality consisted in blindfolding him securely, so that he should not be able to make spy-like observations upon the condition of things within the barriers. As soon as his eyes were covered he was led on into one of the log houses, the windows of which had been darkened. Candles were burning here, and several American officers were sitting around the room, gravely ready to hear whatever he might have to say. He delivered his commander's epistle, and whatever else he added is not accurately recorded, but the task of answering him was turned over to no less a plain-spoken man than Colonel Marinus Willett. The old borderer was sufficiently dignified and ceremonious, but the energy with which he told the Englishman that the fort would be defended to the last extremity arose into a kind of warlike eloquence. Then the eye bandages were put on again, the major was conducted to the gate, and the whole affair took on an appearance of something like grim humor.

It could not be denied, nevertheless, that the situation was serious, and the log-house council of war continued its deliberations.

"Colonel Gansevoort," said Willett at last, "we can hold the fort. I have no doubt of that. What is on my mind is just this. St. Leger's army is in bad condition. It is getting worse every day. If General Schuyler knew

the exact truth he would manage to send men enough to scatter this siege altogether. He could wipe out this end of Burgoyne's campaign, and leave his whole force free to face the descent of the British main body from Ticonderoga."

"That is precisely my opinion," replied Gansevoort; "but who is to explain the matter to Schuyler? I dare not run the risk of putting what we propose in writing. Any force sent ought to come as a surprise."

"I'm your man!" exclaimed Willett. "I can get through, if anybody can. I can tell him all there is to be told. I can make General Schuyler do more than a letter could. Letters can't answer questions."

"Hurrah!" shouted Gansevoort. "Take one man with you and make the trial."

"Then I want Lieutenant Stockwell," said Willett. "He is as good a woodsman as any Indian. The sooner we are off the better. Anyhow, we can say that we left the fort in good condition, with no immediate danger of a direct attack by the enemy. They haven't men enough to storm it—not white men—and no Indians will try to storm works like ours with seven hundred riflemen behind them. As for anything like a trap or a surprise, I think that is out of the question."

On the whole, the demand for immediate surrender seemed to be read as a confession of weakness, and a pretty

cheerful state of mind existed among the defenders of the post, but there was no need for letting everybody know all that was going on. The next day, the 10th, closed stormily, and its evening found all that region shrouded in rain and mist. The open fields toward the river were not under the watchful eyes of the enemy at any time, and nothing upon that level could have been seen after sunset. Lieutenant Stockwell had volunteered enthusiastically, and there was no occasion for special remarks when he and Colonel Willett strolled out together, taking their rifles with them. They were the very men from whom extra vigilance was to have been expected on such a night as that. On they went until they were concealed by the gloom, and they did not come back again. Tradition says that they found the river swollen and had to help themselves across it on a log, in the absence of any boat. At all events, they did get over and plunged bravely out into the forest on the right bank. Once well away from the fort they were comparatively safe, and it was only a matter of watchful endurance to make the rest of their way to the nearest settlements. Moreover, it was of small importance then how many of the garrison knew why neither of them made an appearance in the fort as the days went by.

Those were anxious days for the generals and statesmen of America. The country was really prosperous, but not many were willing to believe it. The armies, north and

south, had done wonderfully well, but there were thousands of despondent or even of envious and malicious tongues loudly asserting that they had not done so. The people were hungry for brilliant victories, and were not able to understand that General Washington was all the while winning a decisive victory by keeping the largest British army penned up in New York, and in steadily wearing out the strength and patience of the English nation. European statesmen and commanders understood the situation better and were aware that if he could keep up this process long enough Great Britain would have to give up the war. It was mainly because Washington's ceaseless wear and tear had become unendurable that General Burgoyne's invading expedition had been organized and sent. He was to take possession of the country behind Washington's camps, put him between two fires, let out Sir Henry Clinton's forces from New York, and put an end to the war. All this plan was well understood by the enemies of Washington, for it was loudly announced beforehand. They appeared in many cases to have already accepted the British campaign as a success. To them it was almost as if General Burgoyne had already defeated General Schuyler's small army, had marched down along the Hudson, and had captured the Continentals and their "slow general."

Besides all this there was a great deal of grumbling among the officers and men of the army, for they were

badly paid, badly clothed, badly fed, and any of them would have preferred active campaigning to so much lying still in uncomfortable camps.

The men who assailed Washington talked as bitterly against his trusted friend, General Schuyler. They said, among other things, that he was no military man at all, and had never won a battle. That was about what they declared concerning Washington, and of him they added that he had been severely defeated a number of times. It was this kind of chatter, going from lip to lip and house to house, which had seriously interfered with the gathering of reenforcements for General Schuyler's army. He was said to now have less than four thousand men wherewith to meet Burgoyne's ten thousand and all the Indians whom he might bring with him. Of course he would surely be defeated, and this would be a final evidence of his unfitness for so important a command. To make things worse for a few days there now came the direful news of what the libelers described as Herkimer's defeat at Oriskany. All Tories were jubilant and all Whigs were down-hearted until the truth arrived and began to circulate instead of the falsehood. Any man who got hold of the facts could understand that when an army like that under St. Leger is chased for a mile through the woods while its camps are being plundered it has not won a victory that it can be excessively proud of. All that part of the

story, indeed, did not get fairly out until Colonel Willett and Lieutenant Stockwell made their escape down the valley with their scalps on their heads, telling as they went how safe the fort was and how sharp a lesson had really been given to its besiegers. The spirits of the frontiersmen began to rise an inch at a time. The wheat, oats, and rye were now all in, the corn and potatoes were not ready to gather, and it might be that a patriotic militiaman would be able to go and help fight Burgoyne and be again upon his own farm before husking-time.

Added to all this were the wild stories told concerning the numbers and purposes of the red men. The several proclamations of the British commanders had avoided making open threats of massacres, but at the same time private intimations, just as good as proclamations, had set forth what fates might be expected by all rebels if the great flood of savage vengeance should pour over the land after the coming defeat of General Schuyler. One unexpected consequence came with pretty good rapidity. The discontented men and the half-way Tories began to take the Indian matter into consideration, for they were not by any means lunatics. It seems to have occurred to them to ask themselves how a Huron or Iroquois warrior was to know just whose house he was to burn, and just whose wife and children he was to tomahawk and scalp for being rebels. What if a gentleman in feathers and war-paint should make

mistakes, and should bear away with him the trophies of loyal New Yorkers who had never done a thing to help the rebels and had secretly maintained great devotion to their King—the King who was now sending the Indians in upon them? It was an important thing to think of, and it was already making a change in the coming in of volunteers during the month of August. Large numbers made their preparations at once, but they had not yet gathered at Stillwater, and the camps there were as thin as ever.

The remnant of the Tryon County militia who had fought so well at Oriskany was now at Fort Dayton and was receiving many recruits. Its term of service had not expired, and it would be ready to take its part in any further operations under General Schuyler. As for Brom Roosevelt, he was out of the army, but he did not appear to be aware of it. His mother had declared that she would never let him go again, but both she and he were spending nearly all of their waking hours at the Herkimer mansion rather than at their own home, while old Polly Winton was proving herself an unusually capable and faithful nurse for the general and for others who were suffering. The 13th of the month arrived, and it was toward noon of that day that Brom stood in the gateway of the Herkimer place stockade. Not far from him was hitched the sorrel which had run away with him so well, but while the animal did not appear quite so ill fed as formerly he was out of sorts,

and his long head was drooping as if he were disposed to be sulky instead of spirited. Brom was looking at him, and had made assertions as to changes which he said had been accomplished with a currycomb and brush, but a sudden flush of excitement came into his face and he sprang forward, shouting:

“Hurrah! Colonel Willett! Lieutenant Stockwell! I hope the fort hasn’t been taken. If it has, how did they get away?”

They were near enough to hear him, and the colonel called back:

“No, Brom, the fort’s all right; but how is the general?”

Brom’s answer to that question was held back for a moment, and then he and the two officers were exchanging information rapidly.

“Now,” said the colonel, “we must see General Herkimer, if he is at all able to speak to us. Will you go and see?”

“Come to the house with me,” said Brom. “He would want to see you if he were dying. But you mustn’t try to say too much. He suffers dreadfully.”

Not a word was said by either of them as they went on with him, and it appeared that they had not expected to find the general so badly hurt. Polly Winton met them at the door, and it was with some difficulty that they obtained

her permission to let him know that they were there. As soon as he did so he insisted upon having them brought into his room. He held out both hands when they came in, and Colonel Willett, as he took one of them, burst into tears.

“Don’t!” murmured the general. “I can’t stand that. Just tell me how things are at the fort and whatever else it is necessary for me to know. Speak slowly now, and don’t leave out anything. I’ve been worrying my life out about that garrison ever since the battle.”

Willett gained his self-control and told his whole story, including his intended trip to see General Schuyler. The general fully approved, of course, and he added a number of verbal messages, but did not offer to send any despatches in writing. They might be superfluous, perhaps, when all that could be said was in the care of so good a messenger. At the end of it all, however, he said, sadly:

“I sympathize deeply with Schuyler. I know what men he has, and how some of them and some of his officers are feeling and acting. I am almost afraid that he will not have any sufficient force that he can send. Too many of his enemies are in his way. Anyhow, go. Do your best, and he will do his. I will provide you with horses. Good-by.”

Quite enough had been said on both sides, and the parting of the old companions in arms was solemnity itself. To-

gether they had borne the fatigue and perils of long and hard campaigns, but that was all forever over now. Men had deemed both of them stern and rough and difficult to deal with, but there are tender spots in the hearts of such as they.

Willett and Stockwell walked slowly out, and the general beckoned to Brom, who had been standing at the foot of the bed.

"Don't speak," he said. "I am weary and faint. I know what will be some of the difficulties in the way of General Schuyler. He is surrounded by all sorts of plots and jealousies. I know one man who can help him in this matter. Get a pen and some paper and write what I will tell you."

There was a small writing-table in a corner of the room, and while Brom was bringing it the general ordered all others to go out, for he said:

"Nobody but Philip Schuyler must know this."

As soon as they were alone and Brom sat down to write he added:

"Put no name at the head of the paper, and tell no living person one word about this errand. Your mother will let you carry it. It is the last thing that I can do for my country. Write."

He was silent for a moment, drawing his breath with difficulty.

"My dear general," he then said, and Brom wrote it down. "When you read this I shall be dead. I am dying now. The bearer is my nephew, Brom Roosevelt. Hear all he can tell you. Get Schuyler to give you all the men he can spare. More will join you at this post. You can scatter St. Leger's forces like chaff. They are nearly beaten already. When that is done Burgoyne is beaten. As you march back after your victory all the militia in the valley will rally with you and behind you. By this means you will double Schuyler's army. Do it!"

He raised himself a little, and held out his hand for the pen. One more effort and he had written a full, firm signature at the bottom of the sheet, and then his head fell back upon the pillow.

"Brom," he whispered, "you may show that to General Schuyler, if it is necessary, but it is not for him. There is but one man who can do this thing. Take that first to General Benedict Arnold and tell him all you know. I am glad you saw it all with your own eyes. Good-by, Brom. Kiss me, my boy. Good-by."

Out went Brom with the hot tears pouring down his face, but his mother had been waiting for him in the entry-way.

"Brom, dear," she said, "what is it?"

It needed but few words to explain the matter, and she exclaimed:

"Why, of course you are to go! You can go along with Colonel Willett and Lieutenant Stockwell in the morning."

"No, mother," said Brom. "They are not to even know that I am going. It is a secret errand. I am to see General Schuyler himself, and only one other man. I must not tell who he is. Not even you. The general is dying."

"Oh, no, I hope not," she said. "We believe he will rally. But I would not have you disobey him for the world. I can let you have a little money. Not much; but then you will not need much. What horse will you take? We are almost out of horses."

"The sorrel, mother," said Brom. "He can get there quicker than anything they will be riding—if he doesn't break my neck."

He had his dinner to eat, and there were a few other preparations for his suddenly ordered journey, but he did not see his uncle again. He had one more talk with his friends from Fort Schuyler, but he could almost understand why it was best for them at least not to seem to know that another messenger had been sent on in advance of them. Perhaps Colonel Willett himself would have said that it was wise to let such a man as General Arnold remain entirely free to act without any of the men around him knowing precisely why he was acting.

"I guess he'll know what it's best for him to do," thought Brom.

At that hour no other officer in the American army held so high a reputation for desperate courage, dash, energy, and a certain kind of military ability as did the man who afterward brought upon himself such utter ruin. If this had not been so he would not have had, as he did, the unstinted confidence of his fellow soldiers, and of Washington himself. Brom had heard a great deal about him, and among other things he had been told that Arnold was a man of a hot and uncertain temper, whom nobody cared to trifle with, and who was not always easy to get at.

"I'll get at him," he thought, as he went to unhitch the sorrel, "and I can tell him a heap of things that he can't find out from anybody else. How stupid this old brute is looking!"

The sorrel indeed appeared to have lost for the time being all interest in the affairs of this world, but Brom himself was becoming intensely excited over his unexpected and important duties. They were putting out of his mind even his deep and sincere grief for his uncle, but as to that he could console himself a little.

"After all," he thought, "mother may be right about it. He may pull through. He is weak to-day, but he may feel better to-morrow."

There was really only a faint hope of that, but Brom's next anxiety was for his probable luck in getting into the saddle. He began with watchful care, but, to his surprise, the sorrel stood as still as a log while he mounted, and then looked around in a lazy, uninterested manner, as if he did not care two coppers what might be coming next. At this moment, however, the stockade gate was suddenly thrown open, and the sorrel instantly made a dash in that direction with a loud neigh of delight.

"That's it!" exclaimed Brom. "I noticed that at Fort Schuyler. He hates a fort, and he wants to get out. It kills him to be tied up. Well, I'll give him all the exercise he needs before we get to Stillwater."

It is entirely possible that the horse might be aware that he was now carrying the same rider with whom he had formerly enjoyed so magnificent a runaway and the fun of being shot at by Indians. At all events, he was willing to leave that stockade behind him at almost as good a gait as he had shown when he escaped from St. Leger and his army. Out he went, along the Albany road, and he was likely to reach the Hudson River; for instance, sooner than any other horse that was about to follow him. Brom had left his rifle behind him this time, for there would be no enemies to shoot and it would be a useless encumbrance. He was altogether a civilian, and not a soldier, when he settled himself in his stirrups and galloped away.

Mrs. Roosevelt had made one mistake in her motherly calculations. Colonel Willett and the lieutenant had no idea of wasting time at the Herkimer place or at Fort Dayton. Whether or not they were in need of rest their errand admitted of no delay, and they were only an hour or so behind Brom. They were well mounted, too, and while they were not likely to catch up with him they would surely be at the headquarters of General Schuyler within a few hours after the sorrel's arrival. For that matter, Brom was aware that he must not exhaust the too willing animal, and he succeeded in bringing him down to a respectable traveling rate after he had speeded him for a couple of miles. Perhaps he could not have done so but for the entire confidence created in the sorrel that one more fort had been escaped from, Indians or no Indians.

All three of the mounted messengers would have been glad to know how things were going at the head of the valley. They had really no certain assurance that disaster had not befallen Colonel Gansevoort and his garrison by stratagem or by a desperate assault. Such things do occur in war, and the apparently surest of military calculations will sometimes break down. They were therefore compelled to ride on in a kind of blind faith that all was well behind them. Very nearly so it was with Colonel Gansevoort himself. He could not be sure that either Willett or Stockwell had escaped the prowling emissaries of Brant or

the many openly known or secret Tories whom they were likely to meet on their way. All he could do was to guard his lines vigilantly by night and day, and to watch the slow, cautious approaches which his assailants were making. He could comfort himself somewhat, nevertheless, with a conviction that their supply of cannon-balls and bombs was manifestly wearing out without at the same time wearing out his earthworks.

At the Herkimer mansion all was quiet the next morning. It was said to inquirers that the general had passed a comfortable night, and only those who loved him best and were watching him the most closely were aware that he was slowly, steadily sinking. He was even delirious at times, and would half arise with efforts to speak, as if he were giving directions to his militiamen upon some imaginary battle-field. At one instance they could partly make out what he was trying to say in a dreamy conversation of apparent questions and answers. The names of General Schuyler and several others were heard. Then he seemed to be telling General Washington:

“Yes, general, I told Philip to send Arnold and finish my work. It was the best thing to do. He is the right man, now that I am dead.”

There were rough and hard-looking men present who broke down completely—as completely as did the women—when they listened to that. Then he went to sleep, and

they whispered to one another, cautiously, that they hoped he would recover, after all.

There was one more subject which had exercised the minds of many persons at Fort Dayton as soon as they found time to think of it. They were much troubled as to what they were to do with that remarkable young Tory Hon Yost Schuyler, and well they might be, for all the facts had leaked out, and there was no doubt whatever concerning the awful crime he had been guilty of. He had been a British spy there and at Albany and at Fort Schuyler. He had carried information to the enemy, and then he had been taken with arms in his hands among the Tories at Oriskany, while the Iroquois were scalping his own neighbors. Men who had been wounded in that fight and people who had lost friends or relatives were exceedingly bitter against him.

He was now securely locked up in the jail-room at the fort, and it was a kind of relief to declare that nothing definite needed to be done with him until General Schuyler could be heard from or until General Herkimer should recover sufficiently to be consulted. Then it might be best to have some kind of court-martial, and just now there was no officer on hand of sufficient rank to call one or to order the culprit to be hanged after conviction. So Hon was permitted to walk up and down in his jail for the time being, and to hurrah for George Washington sarcastically, and to

sing as many scraps and patches as he happened to know of Tory songs or religious hymns. On the whole, he appeared to be taking more to the latter description of music since so many men had told him that he was sure to be both shot and hanged pretty soon.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BROKEN PIPE-STEM

A SORREL horse was halted by the guard at the gate of the American camp at Stillwater only just long enough for his rider to announce that he was a bearer of despatches from General Herkimer to General Schuyler. Then the sorrel had reasons of his own for being willing to walk on quite dignifiedly along the broad lane between the tents and huts.

"I don't know just where the general's quarters are now," muttered Brom. "They've been changing things. I must ask somebody."

A little beyond him, at one side of the camp avenue, he saw three gentlemen in unusually good civilian dress, and he reined his horse toward them. As he did so he could hear one of them loudly saying:

"My dear sir, you are wrong! What more do we want? Have we not heard enough? The whole frontier left open to the inroads of the merciless savages. A mere militia general like Herkimer put in charge of troops, only to have them massacred, and then to run away from the

battle-field! Fort Schuyler abandoned to its fate and about to surrender! Is it not enough?"

"I think it is a little too much," began one of the other gentlemen, but before he could say any more a large sorrel horse-head was almost over his shoulder, and a shrill, angry voice was leaning toward him and shouting:

"Sir, that's all a lie! General Herkimer was not defeated, and he did not run away. He was mortally wounded and he is dead now, I'm afraid, but we drove St. Leger's men back to the fort, and we broke up the camp of Sir John Johnson's Royal Greens. The fort is all right, too."

The somewhat fat, heavy, tremendous-looking gentleman whom he was so vehemently addressing looked up at him with an expression of supreme contempt as he responded:

"You are one of Schuyler's whoopers, are you? Don't you dare to dispute me! I know what I am talking about, and you do not."

"Get along, you insolent young vagabond," began another of the exceedingly respectable trio; but Brom's blood was up, and he shouted back:

"You are a Tory! You are a liar! You don't know anything about it! It's all a lie!"

"My boy," interrupted the third gentleman, more mildly, "we are members of Congress. We are an in-

vestigating committee. You can not know more than we do about these things."

Brom had not been aware of the near approach of a robust man in uniform who now stood a little behind him and appeared to be listening intently, but he yelled more fiercely than ever:

" You don't know anything at all. Not one of you! I was in Fort Schuyler when the British attacked it. I was in the Oriskany fight. I was at the side of General Herkimer when he went down. We chased the British for more than a mile. They lost more men than we did. You are a Tory! It is such talk as yours that they all talk. The whole valley is rising!"

" Hurrah!" shouted the last of the three committee-men, reaching up a long arm. " Shake hands on that. It's the best we've heard. I want to hear the whole thing from beginning to end. You know what we do not."

" I must deliver my despatches first," began Brom, but at that moment the man in uniform spoke in a stern, commanding voice:

" Stop right there, despatch-bearer! Not one word more until you have seen the general. Lee is all right, but the other two are no better than Tories. Ride on! I'm General Arnold."

" General Arnold! Your Excellency," exclaimed Brom, eagerly, " please, may I come and see you right away?"

"As soon as you have delivered your errand," replied the general, "come to my own quarters."

He gave Brom his directions for finding General Schuyler, and then, as the sorrel cantered wearily away, he turned and uttered words of bitter reproof to the two associates of Lee. He was a man of a rough tongue, and sometimes he did not think ahead with sufficient prudence. The hour was to come when it would be a bad thing for him to have too many personal enemies in the national Legislature.

There had really been no breach of military discipline in Brom's angry outburst, but the general was right in putting an end to it, for other ears had heard, and much of what had been said was already passing along from man to man among the private soldiers. Arnold could not have known what else an enthusiastic young patriot might let out concerning affairs which General Schuyler would prefer to hear of first.

There was a sentinel at the door of the general's quarters, and as Brom dismounted he recognized him, for he did not wait for a word of information before he turned his head and reported:

"Your Excellency, here is that nephew of General Herkimer."

"Thank God!" came loudly back from within. "Let me see him!"

"Brom!" exclaimed General Schuyler the next mo-

ment, as the young messenger stood before him. "How are things? Tell me! We have all sorts of conflicting reports. How is General Herkimer?"

Brom held out his packet of despatches in silence, but something in his face may have been read, for the general instantly added:

"Orderly, close the door! Admit no one till further orders. I will attend to this. We heard he was wounded. How is he now?"

"Mother said she hoped he would get well," said Brom, hesitatingly; "but I heard the surgeon say that he could not live three days."

General Schuyler covered his face with his hands and groaned:

"Oh, my God, what a loss this is! Then he is dead now. The cause of liberty can not spare such men as he was. Not in this day of evil counsels. But his death ought to raise the whole frontier!"

"Your Excellency," said Brom, bravely, "I believe that is what it is doing. I was with him all the while."

"Sit down and tell me," said the general. "These are not despatches."

They were not, for they were only a letter from his own mother and another from the mother of the unfortunate Hon Yost. Brom was himself the important parcel, and he was a large one. The letter to General Arnold was

not at once exhibited, but General Schuyler questioned him closely while he told the whole of his long, terrible story of the battle of Oriskany.

"That will do," said the general at last. "I am glad Colonel Willett is coming. He can give me a great deal that you can not. It must be that he will arrive to-night or to-morrow. Your uncle was wise to send you at once. Go now, and the orderly will see that you are cared for."

There were abundant reasons, personal as well as public, why he was deeply affected by the loss of General Herkimer. At the same time the correct account of the condition of affairs in the upper valley was a great relief to him. Moreover, it was not at all unpleasant when, a little later, he was informed by General Arnold of the manner in which Brom had expressed his opinions to the congressional investigating committee.

"I am glad the boy told them the truth right out," he said. "It is not often that they get it quite so strongly put. The fact is that any man who lets his tongue add to the troubles of our armies is worse than a Tory."

The horses ridden by Colonel Willett and Lieutenant Stockwell must have been as tired as was the sorrel, for it was only sunset when Colonel Gansevoort's messengers also were closeted with General Schuyler. They had reports to make as interesting as Brom's had been, but Colo-

nel Willett almost laughed aloud when, for the first time, he was informed that Brom had been ahead of him.

"What won't that boy do next!" he muttered. "He gets in everywhere."

"He had a special errand from his uncle," replied the general.

"I see," said Willett. "Poor Herkimer! He was feverish that day. He was out of his head part of the time. I am glad he sent Brom, though. He is an intelligent young fellow, and as brave as a lion."

That conference was a long one, and at that very hour the boy they had spoken so well of was shut up with General Benedict Arnold, and was telling him all that he had to tell under the gaze of the most piercing pair of dark eyes that he had ever looked into. He had delivered General Herkimer's letter, and it had been read without one word of immediate comment, to his great surprise. He had received no intimation of what was likely to be done on account of it.

He had noticed, half unconsciously, that the quarters he was now in and the internal furnishing around him were decidedly superior to even those of General Schuyler himself, and that the uniform of the dashing brigadier was in much better order than had been that of the major-general. What he did not know was that one of the weak spots of Arnold's character was his unfortunate vanity concern-

ing external appearances and his recklessness in expenditure. It was this, perhaps, more than anything else, which finally drove him into his downward path to ruin. At this date, however, it had cost him only the continual inconveniences which will surely come upon a man who is living beyond his income and whose pay is of uncertain arrival. The latter was a chronic difficulty with all the officers and men of the Continental army, and it at last had other bad results besides the West Point plot which cost Major André his life and General Arnold his honor.

"I see how it is," he said, after once more reading thoughtfully the sad letter from General Herkimer. "There is an opportunity for a decisive movement. I must talk with Colonel Willett. I must see Schuyler. Now, my boy, you must not let anybody, not even your friends, know that you have had this talk with me. There will be a council of war, and all the weak-minded patriots and the half-Tories will oppose sending away one soldier from this army, although it will take Burgoyne weeks to get here and we are only wasting our time in this camp. Mark this, though; I shall go!"

His eyes were flashing fire, and Brom looked at him with strong admiration, for just then he was calling to mind the Montreal campaign and a dozen other daring affairs in which the remarkable man before him had been distinguished. He took his leave in the most respectful

manner, and went to see to the welfare of the sorrel, while General Arnold went to the headquarters for a long consultation with General Schuyler.

Brom's eyes opened at an early hour of the next morning in a tent of the Connecticut line, and he was up like a flash.

"I must hang around and watch for a chance to see Willett or some of them," he was thinking. "I must be ready for anything that may turn up. I'm awfully hungry just now."

He ate the camp breakfast provided for him, and then he walked out with a very indefinite idea as to what he was to do next, but he had something of a surprise waiting for him. He had not gone far before he saw company after company of men forming and marching on toward the parade-ground, armed and equipped as if for a movement of some sort.

"What on earth can that be for?" he asked of a soldier who met him.

"What is it, my boy?" replied the soldier. "Don't you see General Schuyler and General Arnold? They are calling for volunteers for the expedition to rescue Gansevoort and his men up the river. Those are the Massachusetts boys that are turning out. Almost all of Larned's brigade have said that they will go. General Arnold is to command them. They say there was the hottest kind of

time at headquarters last evening. But if he wanted more men he could have 'em. We are all sick of this camp."

He and Brom had a pretty interesting talk after that, but it was not until Brom had seen Colonel Willett that he knew all about that memorable council of war. It had been summoned instantly upon Arnold's conference with Schuyler, and it had indeed been a hot one. A considerable number of the more prominent officers who were then in camp had attended it, and some of them appeared to be suffering under fits of depression, which may have received only poor help from the operations of the congressional committee.

The facts of the situation were laid before them, and the replies made asserted that the representations of Colonel Willett and Lieutenant Stockwell were manifestly over-drawn. They were rose-colored and exaggerated. The condition of things at Fort Schuyler could not possibly be as they were set forth. Any force which might be sent would but meet the fate of General Herkimer's militia. General Schuyler reasoned with them calmly, between long whiffs of a clay tobacco-pipe that he was smoking; but he did not tell them that this council had been called together merely as a matter of form. He did not think best to assure them that all his arrangements were already made and that he knew exactly what he intended to do. He kept his

temper fairly well, however, it is said, and he smoked on vigorously until he had a half-whisper in a corner:

“What he really means to do is to weaken this army.”

The stem of that pipe was bitten in two instantly, and the general was on his feet with a torrent of angry blood reddening his face.

“Gentlemen,” he shouted, “I shall take the responsibility upon myself! Where is the brigadier who will take command of the relief? I shall beat up for volunteers to-morrow.”

Fiercely prompt was the response of General Arnold that he would accept the perilous honor of the attempt to save the garrison of Fort Schuyler. His offer was met by strong expressions of gratification and confidence, and the council broke up, but there was no waiting until morning before “beating up for volunteers.” There was no time to lose, and the Massachusetts men were taken simply because they were the first to offer their services. Already the truth concerning Oriskany was becoming generally known, and the spirits of the men were rising. All of them knew enough about war to understand that a severe blow had been dealt to that wing of the invading army of the King of England. The congressional committee also had something to learn as they watched the well-disciplined lines of the veterans from the old Bay State and heard their ringing cheers when they listened to the thanks of General

Schuyler and the vigorous address of General Arnold on taking command. As for Brom Roosevelt, however, he was quite soberly thinking:

“Our Tryon County militia can’t step off like that. If Uncle Herkimer had had his men drilled like them he would have had a better chance at Oriskany. Colonel Vischer’s rear-guard would never have been caught napping and cut to pieces.”

There was a great deal in that, and these regulars, as they might well be called, would be under the guidance of Indian fighters as experienced and capable as General Herkimer himself. Among these, for instance, and as if serving on the staff of General Arnold, were Willett and Stockwell, and others like them were waiting at Fort Dayton.

The Massachusetts men who volunteered to relieve Fort Schuyler numbered a little over eight hundred men in first-rate condition. They had been kept ready for instant action by the skilled supervision of their much-criticized commander, and they were on their march westward without the needless waste of an hour. After that they were urged forward by the unceasing zeal of a leader who had in his mind at that hour much more than even the raising of the siege of the fort. He was looking beyond that to the surely coming collision with the army under General Burgoyne, and he purposed to bring back with him these

troops, and more, in good order for the battle-field. He was a prudent and cautious as well as a daring adventurer, and he had no intention of taking needless risks. Again and again as they went along he talked over the whole ground with his frontiersmen, and he made Brom tell him every minute point relating to Oneida Lake and its approaches. He wished to know about the roads, the boats, and all the woods and hills and other matters which might lie behind the camps and entrenchments of the British army.

"Twenty miles through the woods," he remarked to Colonel Willett. "It is all forest to the shore of the lake. You are right. If we can make out to drive St. Leger in among the trees and bushes he and Brant may get away. We will not follow them far."

CHAPTER XVII

THE FATE OF HON YOST

It was the 20th of August when the wayworn American troops were halted at Fort Dayton, and Brom Roosevelt could go and pay a visit to his mother. Hardly had she had given him her first hug before she exclaimed:

“Brom, dear! Oh, I’m so glad you got back again! But your Uncle Herkimer died a week ago, and we are all feeling so dreadfully about it.”

He had already heard the sad news, but there were many more things for her to tell, and once more she was exceedingly proud of him.

The loss of the old general had aroused a deep feeling among his hosts of friends. So had the fate of every militiaman who had fallen at Oriskany, especially that of the wounded men who had been butchered and scalped instead of being treated as prisoners of war. Moreover, there were several scores who were reported as captives, but concerning whom no trustworthy information could be obtained. These also might have perished under the knife and tomahawk. A spirit of revenge was rising fast, and volunteers

were setting out by the hundred, singly or in squads, for the several places of rendezvous and for the camps of General Schuyler.

It was needful that General Arnold should give his men a day of rest, and that he himself should obtain all possible information concerning the condition of affairs. As to the fort, it had been almost impossible for messengers to get out, but one had succeeded in doing so, bringing word from Colonel Gansevoort that the British were pressing him, but that his works had as yet sustained no serious damage. He still had plenty of provisions, and was holding out quite as well as he had expected.

"That is all I can ask for," remarked General Arnold, quietly. "Every day of that siege has been wearing out the enemy. They have been pounding away at those entrenchments long enough to disgust any but the regulars. I wish I knew just about how many redskins there are left in those woods."

"Not so many as when the hammering began, I guess," laughed Colonel Willett. "Indians come and go. But whatever he may have of them, they are the most dangerous part of St. Leger's army to us. He can do little without them against such a force as ours. My opinion is that, take Gansevoort's men and ours together, we outnumber all the white troops that he can bring into a battle without leaving his camps empty."

"I have no doubt of it," replied Arnold, "and we must do something or other to take the fight out of his Indians."

Just how such a thing was to be done did not at once appear, but he was to have assistance which could not reasonably have been expected. One of the knotty questions which had been brought before him was the queer affair of Hon Yost Schuyler. The bitterness of feeling against him appeared to be increasing, and prompt action was almost demanded.

"He must be hung, of course," said the general. "All spies ought to be hung or shot. So ought a good many loud-mouthed patriots that I know of. I must look into his matter."

He was not actually in need of information, for Brom had told him all the particulars while on the march. The general had listened in silence, as was his custom, and Brom had been left in the dark as to what his intentions might be.

"I wish I knew," thought Brom. "I meant to see General Schuyler about it, but I couldn't get a chance. Colonel Willett says he spoke to him, but that is all he can tell me. I wish I could save Hon Yost!"

That had been all the comfort he could give poor Mrs. Schuyler, and she was in deep distress. She did not know General Arnold very well, and nobody else did. Who would have supposed that he had any fun in him? It may have been only a kind of grim humor, but it was there.

Her troubles deepened suddenly, therefore, when several of his officers were summoned to a hasty court-martial at the fort to consider Hon's case. His mother and others were to be present, but before the court could get together Brom had brought to the general yet another important personage. He had turned up that very day, while he came out of the Herkimer stables, after taking a look at the now fast fattening sorrel.

"Halt! Ho, Brom!" greeted him unexpectedly, as he walked along with his head down, absorbed in a deep study of the seemingly dark chances of Hon Yost Schuyler for escaping a rope and a tree.

There was a stern earnestness in the tone and manner of the speaker, and Brom saw that something especial was coming.

"Ough-na-ga-ra," he responded. "Good! Why doesn't the chief go and see the general? Have talk with him?"

"Ugh!" grunted the Oneida. "No like him. Want talk with him."

"Good!" said Brom. "Chief, come with me."

He felt perfectly sure that the general would be glad to see the spy for both sides, and they walked on together toward the fort. He was half astonished, however, when the Oneida condescended to tell him something of his plans and purposes in a somewhat un-Indian way.

"Arnold bad man!" he said. "No see him in morn-

ing. Brom go tell him Ough-na-ga-ra no fool. Been to Oswego. Been to Fort Schuyler. Saw Sir John. Saw St. Leger. Saw Brant. All say must take fort right away. Arnold heap fool. Go now. No wait. Strike right away. Sir John, Brant, fools; talk hard with Oneida chief. Butler talk hard. Ugh!"

His dark face grew darker as he said that, and it occurred to Brom that Tha-yen-da-ne-gea had managed to offend the pride of the savage warrior, as he was said to have offended at times more than one of his red allies. It was also understood that he now and then had sharp collisions with Sir John Johnson himself. If current reports were true the weak spot of the Mohawk leader was his hot temper. To this day may be seen on the balusters of the great staircase of the old Johnson mansion, away back in the woods, the deep marks of the hatchet of the wrathful chief. The hand-rail all the way down and the massive upright at the bottom give their testimony as to how deep he could drive a sharp tomahawk when his blood was up. Undoubtedly, it was best that he should hack mahogany rather than the heads of unfortunate human beings.

General Arnold's quarters were reached and Brom went in first to give the main features of his unexpected errand.

"Just the man I want to see!" exclaimed the general. "I did not know he had been here. They are stupidly careless! He has been a spy for both sides, has he? That's

genuine Indian. He must have been of more use to us than to them. I can make something out of him. Bring him in."

Ceremonious and respectful to the last degree was the reception of the Oneida chief by the American commander, and the report of the state of affairs in the two armies at Fort Schuyler was listened to as if there were no doubt whatever of his friendship and fidelity. At the end of the talk the general arose and shook hands with him most cordially.

"We go on in the morning," he said. "The chief will go on with us. He has earned blankets and a new gun. Now, orderly, bring in that spy. I will settle his business very quickly. He must be hung!"

He spoke as if he did not know that Hon was already in the room, but the culprit had been brought from his prison, and there he stood, looking dolefully around as if seeking for a friendly face. He did not appear to find any, and that of the general himself was hard enough, but on one side of him stood his weeping mother and on the other was Brom Roosevelt with an angry flush on his face. He had stepped there instantly, and he carried with him the air of a fellow who intended to make trouble.

"General Arnold," he exclaimed, "Hon is only half witted. He did not know what he was doing. You ought not to hang him."

"Silence!" interrupted the general, with stern decision.

"Oh, general," sobbed Mrs. Schuyler, "please don't! He never meant any harm. He never really did any. He does not know what a spy is."

"Hurrah for George Washington!" broke in Hon, sorrowfully. "He's just as good as the other King is, God bless him!"

Mrs. Schuyler was beginning to plead again, and Brom was evidently in danger of saying something contrary to good discipline, and so of getting himself into difficulties, when the general cut them off with:

"Madam, please be silent, for a moment. Shut up, Brom. Gentlemen, there is no doubt whatever of this person's guilt. He did carry information to the enemy. That, I think, is what led them into more than one mistake. Half-crazy information is precisely the thing I wish them to have and to act on. Mrs. Schuyler, I will pardon your son and let him go free afterward if he will now play spy again. I wish him to go right on into the British army and tell them we are coming. He may tell them that we have a hundred thousand men if he wants to. He will march with us to-morrow, and I will send him ahead with his news. My friend the great Oneida chief will go with him, and he may tell his friend Brant and Sir John Johnson everything he has seen here. In the meantime, orderly, you may lock Hon up again. He is uncertain."

"Oh, general, thank you!" exclaimed Mrs. Schuyler. "It is all I could ask. My heart was almost breaking. He is such a trial to me!"

"So he is to me, madam," replied the general, politely. "I am afraid he won't carry half news enough. The fact is, gentlemen, the cause of liberty does not demand the hanging of half-witted fellows, when so many entirely intelligent traitors are being sent to Congress."

It was beyond a doubt that that imprudent speech of his, with many others, would be duly reported, and he would suffer the consequences of them on an occasion which was only a few months in the future. He himself was exceedingly intelligent, but there was an open question as to the exact balance of his daring and self-willed and very haughty mind.

Hon Yost was led away, accompanied by his mother and Brom, and his dangers appeared to be temporarily ended. Even the angry neighbors seemed to be pacified, although General Arnold had treated some of their vehemence with out-and-out contempt. He had reminded them that the army needed recruits, and that they did not appear to be in any hurry to get to General Schuyler's camp.

It is not recorded precisely how many of the Tryon County militia whom he found assembled at Fort Dayton actually went forward with the troops under Arnold, but there were enough of them to strengthen him materially.

From the first, however, he had proposed to himself not to waste any men in an avoidable battle. If the object of his expedition could be gained without one he would have the more soldiers in good spirits and condition to take back with him for the coming struggle with Burgoyne's main body. He now learned more fully from the Oneida chief the state of feeling among such of the Iroquois as still remained with St. Leger. He found that there might be six hundred of them, there might be more, but they were not feeling well since Oriskany. No additional Indians were to be expected by the British commander until after a big victory. Such, for instance, as the capture of the fort and the slaughter of its garrison. As for the Tories and Canadians, and even the British regulars themselves, they, too, were weary, and important reenforcements which were said to have been promised had not arrived. Neither had powder and balls for the cannon, and it looked as if the end of the siege were almost as far away as ever. The fact seemed to be that if there were only fourteen hundred or fifteen hundred white soldiers under St. Leger fit for a movement they were now fully equaled by the forces under Arnold and Gansevoort, if these could manage to cooperate with each other.

General Arnold's march from Fort Dayton was made with rapidity, as if he intended a surprise. That he knew was impossible, but suddenness and dash were an important

element in the idea which he had in his mind. He pushed on without needless haltings until he reached the Oriskany battle-field, and right here he went into camp. Brom Roosevelt, on the sorrel, had been only a few lengths behind him all the way, for he had so much to do with this campaign that he was determined to be on hand and see the end of it, if this were to be the end.

"Brom!" shouted the general, turning in his saddle. "Come along and tell me exactly how this affair took place. I don't see why there need have been any trap or surprise. Colonel Willett was not in it, but he had better come with us. I always take an interest in battle-fields. I want to find out how they were lost or won."

It was a sad memory for Brom to recall, but every feature of the engagement had been vividly fixed in his mind, and he could answer all the questions which were asked of him from beginning to end.

"Upon my word, my boy," said the general, "you seem to have been almost everywhere. At all events, there was no fault to be found with General Herkimer. The militia themselves were to blame for whatever errors were committed. There was too much loose talk against their commander, just as there is against General Schuyler. I'd like to shoot some talkers that I know of. They may manage yet to give away a victory to Burgoyne."

It was well known that he and several others of the

fighting generals of the Continental army were exceedingly bitter in their feelings toward the statesmen at Philadelphia, both in and out of Congress, who were giving so much hurtful attention to military affairs. It was an unsafe condition of mind for a man to be in who was at all within the reach of those very statesmen and critics, and he had no right to question as he did either their patriotism or their ability. He was laying up trouble for himself, and he was not doing any good to either Schuyler or Washington.

"I know all about this place now," he said at last. "It is time for me to send in the Oneida chief and the lunatic. I wonder what they will say. Neither of them knows how to tell the truth."

It was not to be supposed that such a movement as that of General Arnold had been made without the knowledge of the British commander. He had received early warning from the Albany Tories, but was without definite information as to its numerical strength. For all he knew, the march of the Americans was to be like that of a snowball, increasing in size as it rolled along. Moreover, the speed of its advance had been much underestimated, and there had been great astonishment that very morning when a swift runner of the Senecas announced in the camp of the besiegers that he had seen the advance-guard of their enemies at the mouth of Oriskany Creek. There were two councils of war summoned at once. One of these consisted

of St. Leger himself and his principal officers. It was to meet later in the day, after further efforts made to find out what was coming and how soon. The other came together in the curious manner known to the men of the woods. It was to include not only their leading chiefs and warriors, but also several of the extraordinary characters whom the whites were accustomed to speak of as Indian prophets, for this was deemed an occasion for a solemn invocation of the Great Spirit, who was believed to give occasional wisdom to the plans and purposes of his Iroquois children. Ordinarily it would appear that they preferred to get along without him, and in this particular they were not without a strong human resemblance to some of their paleface friends and enemies. A place for the grand powwow was designated, and those who were to attend it made their proper preparations for the coming big talk. Paint, feathers, ornaments, and a great deal of discontent and discouragement were all made ready, and the two councils were finally in operation at the same time. The entire army, red and white, was necessarily aware of what was going on, and was in a state of mind to accept any decision which might be arrived at, especially if it should be one which would save them from another fight in the woods at all like that at Oriskany, of which their memories were to the last degree unpleasant.

It was into such a state of things as this that two men

came in apparent haste at about noon. One of them strode along dignifiedly, but with a face that was full of gloom, not to say of deep anxiety. To some of the men whom he met he responded only by a wave of the hand, but to others he said, in one form of words or another:

“I have seen the Americans. They are close at hand. They are many.”

There was less necessity for him to say more because of the eloquence of his companion, who was also well known to many of those about him.

“The great American army has come!” shouted Hon Yost. “They are like the stars in the sky. They are like the leaves on the trees. They will kill us all! Stars! Leaves! They are coming!”

Other utterances of his were calculated to convey the impression that General Schuyler himself had brought nearly if not quite all of his army to the rescue of the fort, and that any kind of opposition to him would be unavailing. It was not by any cunning of Hon’s that his news went first into the powwow to aid the conjurers in their incantations and to chill out all remaining war fever from the minds of the downcast. The “prophets” danced and whooped and gesticulated, grunts and ejaculations were rapidly exchanged among the members of the council. It was but a few minutes before shouts and yells began to interrupt the dignity of the solemn proceedings, and all

the gathered warriors were on their feet loudly declaring their intention of making the best of their way out of the path of the coming destruction.

The wild talk of Hon Yost Schuyler had been eagerly reported in advance of his arrival at the war council of the white men, and it had been received with soldierly composure by the British commander, who was dignifiedly awaiting the expected presence of Ough-na-ga-ra himself. There was an intense interest in whatever he might have to say, for on all previous occasions his statements had been found closely accurate. When he came he was at once admitted to the council, but the same honor was not conferred upon Hon Yost. Of course the first questions asked of the Oneida related to the overswollen estimates of the numbers of the approaching Americans. Was there any truth in them?

“Ugh!” scornfully exclaimed the chief. “Sir John know. Half lie. Hon heap fool! Ough-na-ga-ra at Fort Dayton. Count rifles.”

There was a general sigh of relief, but St. Leger asked:

“Can you tell me who is in command of the Americans?”

“Arnold,” was the curt reply. “Ough-na-ga-ra had big talk with him.”

“How many men has he from General Schuyler’s army? Two thousand?”

"Ugh! No," said the chief. "Eight hundred. May be little more."

"Are any of the militia with him?" asked Sir John Johnson.

"Not so many," replied the Oneida. "More come. No tell how many."

The enormous numbers spoken of by Hon were indeed contemptuously wiped out by the sober figures of the red reporter, but quite enough had been left, and St. Leger had been making calculations, and so had others.

"Gentlemen," he exclaimed, dolefully, "that is all we need to know. Arnold alone may outnumber us as his militia arrive. He is an able commander and knows his resources. We are to be shortly attacked by a superior force, and placed between two fires."

What more was on his lips was not to be made known, for at that moment a loud voice at the door of the tent announced to him:

"General, the Indians are breaking for the woods! Every dog——"

"That is what I was afraid of!" roared Sir John. "Brant has lost his control of them. St. Leger, we must lose no time. We must abandon the siege and fall back to the head of Oneida Lake. We are ruined!"

It looked like it. One large and important part of their army was disappearing like mist. Hardly had the com-

mander and his officers rushed out of the council-tent to see what was going on when they discovered that another panic had seized the Canadians, and that they also were preparing to get away in frantic haste. Butler's Tories caught the runaway fever immediately afterward, for upon them a dire vengeance was likely to fall, if they should be struck by the men of Tryon County. It was all in vain for St. Leger and his officers to attempt the restoration of order. The movement toward the lake promised to be little better than a tumultuous rout, except for the serried lines of the British regulars, and even these exhibited signs of a disposition to march vigorously.

The siege of Fort Schuyler had been raised by General Arnold, with the aid of a half-lunatic and an Indian spy for both sides, without the firing of a shot or the loss of a man. The besieging army was utterly gone. Entrenchments, cannon, huts, tents, camp equipage, stores—all had to be left behind. Not all the valuables of that army fell into the hands of the Americans, however, for the Iroquois braves and squaws did not neglect anything which they were able to carry away—if it were at all worth carrying.

The great Oneida chief and news-bearer did not suffer from any panic, and he did not at once join in the wild rush for the boats and bateaux on the lake. He even had the courage to turn and go alone to face the approaching vanguard of General Arnold's destroying army. He had

an interesting report to make, and he shortly made it to the general himself and to Brom Roosevelt, who was holding in the sorrel a few lengths behind him. The sorrel also must have heard the tidings, for he at once bolted, and there was no stopping him. Brom was therefore the first man of the rescuing force to actually reach the fort. Terrifically enthusiastic was the welcome given him as he dashed in at the gate which had been thrown open, as if especially for him. The throng which gathered around him was quickly so dense that the sorrel actually stood still, and even restrained himself from kicking.

The next American to come in at a little distance behind the sorrel was Hon Yost Schuyler, and he walked along quite soberly, without exhibiting any disposition to sing.

“Brom!” shouted Colonel Gansevoort, as soon as the first burst of cheering had subsided. “Look up! The flag is still flying! The fort is saved! The whole valley is safe! Thank God!”

(4)

THE END

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